Multiversity

Freeing children from the tyranny of schools
Bringing colour back into academic studies

Other India Press
Citizens International

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Edited by Claude Alvares

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1

Recapturing Worlds

(The original Multiversity proposal)

Claude Alvares

For a period of approximately two hundred years now, the societies of Western Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand (predominantly white) have been able to portray themselves as an extremely successful population subgroup, a *First* World high up in the scale of being, compared with other subgroups. The latter, howsoever vast in their numbers, have been seen as defeated segments, unable to do anything worthwhile with their lives except when they are able to closely model them on the Western pattern.

The processes of human history across this period have resulted in the creation of a grotesque and overpowering myth whose narratives simply assume the superior intellect quality and intellectual output of human beings from Western societies and of their institutions as well. Their ethical standards, when compared with what is available to the rest of the planet, are allegedly so advanced they provide them with a certain righteousness with which they berate the rest.

These Western narratives have resulted in giving unwarranted acclaim, dominance and extension to a number of features of Western society ranging from its technology to various aspects of its culture – including music, books and toys –over the artifacts of the rest of humankind.

The most significant part of the myth has been the alacrity with which it has been swallowed by influential people from Asia, Africa and South America. Several of them, principally their intellectuals, have come to believe that unless their societies adopt Western technology and ways of thinking and mimic the behavioural patterns of Euro-American society – howsoever unacceptable and ludicrous these may sometimes be – they cannot consider themselves living valid human lives. We are all painfully aware of the mimic factor and of the phenomenon of mimic men and mimic women.

In this not entirely desirable state of affairs, one of the foremost tasks of intellectuals from the South is to invent creative mechanisms for dismantling this myth or undermining it in different ways and to recapture the unique and irreplaceable destinies, ideals and objectives of their own societies and traditions and fight to give these political space.

There are several projects that can be carried out with this objective in mind. They would include, for example:

A critique of Western science, the emphasis to be on demonstrating how Western science cannot operate in universalist terms but must always act as an ethnoscience, fulfilling the political and cultural goals of the culture in which it was born. If Western science is shown to be a particularistic enterprise – which it is – it is bound to emerge more clearly as the product of its culture's own peculiar vested (power) interests. The resultant suspicion is bound to erode and destabilise the modern science myth. It would also reinforce the significance of indigenous science traditions and popular knowledge.

There must also be an attempt at a fundamental critique of what passes today as 'modern knowledge', particularly in the humanities. The project should attempt to examine the assumptions on which sciences like psychology, history, anthropology, sociology, economics etc are based and to

discuss whether such assumptions are acceptable, and can indeed form the basis for undistorted human intellectual discourse.

A comprehensive critique must emerge of the quality of Western academic work which is today highly overrated and often execrable. Too many texts from the 'centre' are automatically taught in the 'periphery' simply because they originate in the 'centre' and not because of any inherent quality of the texts or originality of the authors, or their relevance to our part of the world. A South-located review journal which lampoons and also critically analyses and debunks much pedantic academic output from the West would also be appreciated and give writers and intellectuals in the South a much needed shot in the arm and confidence in their own insights gained from direct experience.

Since the societies of the West comprise large numbers of basically anomic, psychologically traumatised and otherwise disoriented individuals, the most stinging critique of the West would be enabled by a bare empirical description (through travelogues) of some Western societies and the manner in which they are organised or function (and which is repugnant to the experience of normal human beings from societies like ours).

While such a description could be constructed from extant and contemporary literature on these themes and from analysis of other intellect products of western society – including films etc it should be followed up and grounded in a reverse Naipaul-type of journey into the heart of these societies. Literary analysis and description must be corroborated with pictures. This was done effectively by Nsekuye Bizimana in his frank account of Germany society.

The general idea is to conduct a reverse anthropology or Europology which would examine the West and its intellect products in a wholly clinical manner, just as a modern day pathologist would examine malignant tissue. For we are in fact dealing with a class of human beings that has become a cancer on the planet. The nature of the illness must be bluntly told so that in place of admiration one is left with compassion instead. Orientalism ought not to be substituted by occidentalism, since both are distorted positions on

human beings. What we need is an elaborate histopathology that might see Western individuals at best as infected by the disease of 'occidentosis', a cultural variant of the plague.

For instance, one may examine the totalitarian nature of practically all Western societies reflected in the predominance given to the rights of the market (or technology) to which the rights of human beings are made subordinate. The reality today is that from their youngest years, people in the West must gear themselves to be incorporated with little questioning within the economic system. Misfits are tolerated, not loved. The individual is milked for his or her worth for around 40 years of their life, after which they are relegated to institutions which readily look after their bodily needs but which abuse their soul.

In such a situation, it is an abuse of language to talk of human freedoms and liberal democracy since there is in reality no liberty to opt out of the system of production into which the society has mired itself. In fact, I would go so far as to say that greater freedoms are available to the poorest people in our areas of the planet despite the fact that they remain without all the paraphernalia of modernity and its artificially scented devices.

Attack, ultimately, is the best form of defence. Offence is the most effective form of undermining illegitimate pride and assumptions of being superior. A couple of films, books, comics, exhibitions in which the Westerner comes to eventually recognise what a pain he has become for the rest of all living beings might be bitter medicine for him but it would also be a fairly good elixir for those who have had to submit in order to become his involuntary and voluntary victims.

For making some impact on the situation described above, the following specific projects are recommended:

1. *Academic Studies*:

A radical questioning of faculties and disciplines in use (and taught) in universities and institutes today, which would include examination of their assumptions and relevance; whether some could be discarded, whether new ones might be added. University traditions in Asia do not commence merely with the Europeans: Taxila and Nalanda, for

example, were two extremely well-known ancient Indian universities. The following predominant Western intellectual disciplines could be tortured: psychology, history, sociology, anthropology, economics and political science. We need a better scientific method that escapes the tunnel-vision generated by these disciplines.

2. *Modern Science Criticism:*

This project would take over and expand on the themes discussed at the CAP World Conference on Modern Science in Crisis (1987). What should be seriously undertaken is a cost benefit analysis of modern science; an examination of its cultural origins and aspirations and the form and content of its influence in our societies, as the science done here appears to be nothing more than repetition of what is occurring at the 'centre'. Review must be made of scientific journals.

3. *Europology:*

Over the past 500 years, a huge volume of literature – a significant portion of it quite racist and appalling – has been generated by Western intellectuals about people from the South. The incredible aspect of this dominance is that even texts originating in our societies and translated by Europeans have become the basis for the involvement or engagement of many intellectuals with their own societies. There are scarcely a handful of studies available about industrialised societies written explicitly by people from the South. This is unacceptable and calls for a sustained effort to conduct and create a distinct Europology.

4. *Colonial Structures and Laws:*

Almost all societies in the South continue to be governed by administrative and judicial structures imposed on their societies by their colonisers. Colonial influence is deep and pervasive and often not even recognised. Documentation and analysis of such deep-rooted dependence on colonial modes of thinking and practice is essential if we are to dismantle such structures and replace them with those of our own.

5. *The West and Violence*:

A single project is required in order to document and display the intimate association of Western societies, their philosophies and violence, often facilitated through modern science and other Western institutions. A graphic exhibition of such themes is already prepared and was used on the occasion of protests against celebrations of the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India. Such an exhibit may be used as a basis for an expanded project.

6. *Relinking the countries around the Indian Ocean*

Dharampal, noted Indian historian, has proposed a research project involving Asians including those Asians with a knowledge of European languages, to uncover the links that have existed up to the arrival of the colonial powers, between the countries adjoining the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean. The eventual objective is to enable these countries to form a separate operative world distinct from the European world, with its own ideals, objectives and sphere of influence.

7. *Investigating Western Societies*

Well-established writers from the South who have demonstrated an acute ability for observation and recording should be invited to travel to Western societies, reside there for a few months, and report on the manner in which these societies function. These reports should be published by the institution created to carry out the Multiversity Project. Arrangements should also be made to have these reports republished in some form in the West.

2

Responses to 'Recapturing Worlds'

Ziauddin Sardar

Thanks for the 'Recapturing Worlds' proposal. I do not have any comments to make – except to say that we ought to be careful and make sure we do not end up doing to the West what it has done to us. In other words, our purpose is not to reframe or represent the West in the ways we ourselves have been victimised, but to liberate both the non-West as well as the West. I suppose these points are best made when we actually sit down to discuss the document in a seminar or a conference.

Vinay Lal

I have read your note with much care and interest. I have been thinking along similar lines for many years, and have generated much work (most of which, I suspect, you have not seen) in a similar vein. I will send you some material when I am back in India in a couple of weeks. Though your note is strongly worded, I am in agreement with the tone, as well as the epistemological and political arguments that you advocate. You can count on my support.

B.S. Chimni

Greetings. I would be happy to join the group. However, I have the following comments to make on the basic proposal:

First, the political objective should be to resist Western domination and not condemn everything Western. In my view it is important not to assume essentialist language and vocabulary here. The idea is not to condemn Western peoples *per se* but those structures and practices which have inflicted massive violence (physical, ideological and psychological) on Third World peoples.

Second, that the group that is being assembled need not necessarily share the epistemological and ontological assumptions deployed to critique western domination. This plurality should be encouraged so that the challenge is mounted against Western domination from diverse perspectives.

Third, there should be a sentence somewhere that distances our project from the Hindutva or BJP/RSS or any other fundamentalist version of history or its recovery.

Fourth, the idea in recovering Third World histories should neither be to romanticize the past nor to assume a cultural relativist position which allows to you to defend the most heinous social practices (gender, caste etc) in these societies.

Fifth, in the discussion under the subhead 'colonial structures and law', or better under a separate heading, the subject of international law should be mentioned. This is not merely because I do international law but because Western domination in the era of globalization is being expressed and entrenched in the language of international law. It is displacing national legal systems in their importance. It is therefore an urgent task at hand both to rewrite the history of international law from the standpoint of Third World peoples as well as to offer a contemporary critique.

Sixth, I entirely agree that we need to produce alternatives to First World texts which are taught in Third World universities. In my own field, there is no quality textbook written in the Third World available. The production and dissemination of such a textbook can play an important role in critical knowledge production in the field.

Seventh, there is an urgent need also to look at Third World thinkers in the field of international relations. From Kautilya to Shri Aurobindo, profound contribution has been made to the theory of and thinking in international relations but they have not received the attention they deserve.

Sunil Sahasrabudhey

I have your proposal 'Recapturing Worlds' from the Multiversity Project. I would like to join the group in this exercise. Thank you for inviting me. Hope I will be able to contribute meaningfully.

A few points that occurred to me while reading the proposal are given below:

The changes taking place both in science and society in the name of information, communication, computer etc. are typically a Western product. These processes have, it seems, a very strong destabilising effect on earlier critiques of the West, its science, way of life etc. Maybe we should also address this in the present enterprise.

Ordinary life has, it seems, its own practical ways of defying or not heeding to the West. Probably we should address the connection between such phenomena and the intellectual resistances.

Shilpa and Manish Jain

We have been sharing the idea with other friends from South Asia (the Arab world, Pakistan, Africa) and it looks like many are excited about it. I wanted to share just a few ideas and ask how we might get more involved.

First, there is a fairly strong base of criticism about modernity from within the western world itself. We have a number of critical articles on many of the issues you raise – particularly on science, society, violence, academia/ knowledges, etc. Often in our work, we have had the chance to share such articles with a number of people, who find it surprising and stimulating that many within that society are resisting and speaking out against it. We can share some of these materials with you – we think they will provide a good starting point. After all, serious criticism that comes from within is a powerful complement to that which comes from outsiders.

Second, we think we want to be careful not to entirely (or even primarily) adopt the analytical mode of working. For our work on this front to be meaningful, we want to make sure our language, frameworks, meta-cognition etc. are different from the dominant models of knowledge production/construction. To avoid this pitfall, we think we will need to pay more attention to the regenerative side of Multiversity i.e. we want to draw out the various and diverse knowledge systems, wisdom traditions, languages, learning communities, experiments, modes of expression, etc. that pose a strong challenge to the dominance of modern institutions, structures, attitudes and goals.

Lastly, we understand where you're coming from, but the East vs. West dichotomy might be mistaken for occidentalism/orientalism (even though we know you've responded to that). The article might be helped by clarifying what 'West' means in even more detail – not just 'white people sitting in a geographic location' but a whole set of institutions, values and knowledges, etc.

Aside from helping to incorporate these comments/ideas into the text, how else might we get involved in the process? Please let us know.

Gustavo Esteva

It has been a magnificent gift. Both, to have a letter from you and to get the amazing project you concocted with Mr. Idris.

I am extremely excited. And yes, I would love to join the group. I am even ready to modify my hopes for the following years – I cannot call them 'plans' – in order to better participate in your initiative.

I do seriously think that such an initiative will be able to gather an impressive number of brilliant people, in our own worlds, who for many years have been working in isolation along these lines. They may find in this enterprise an opportunity to share with others their insights and to create a critical mass of thinking and action, enabling all of us to follow our own paths and to contribute to our liberation.

The basic proposal is very solid. I don't have any important observation. However, you may want to consider the following ideas:

1) I am not entirely comfortable with the expression 'Recapturing worlds'. We are embracing them, not applying to them any form of violence, like the violence associated with a 'capture'. On the other hand, we are not opposing Orientalism to Occidentalism, as you clearly say. Where are we, in Latin America? We are abandoning the very idea (project, attempt, accomplished threat) of One World, deconstructed by Wolfgang Sachs in *The Development Dictionary*. For their Intercontinental Encounter, the Zapatistas suggested: *Un mundo en que quepan muchos mundos*, 'A world in which many world can fit' (or, given the connotations of fitness in English, 'A world in which many worlds can be embraced'). Perhaps what we want is to regenerate the multiverse, liberating ourselves from the universe constructed by the West.

2) Yes, attack is the best form of defence. I clearly agree with all the lines of criticism you describe, that will be taken as an offence by the Westerners. But...should we adopt a position of defence, and thus organize the attack? I love to do it. I always do it with Western audiences. I love to provoke them. And I know, by experience, how stimulating and self-affirming it is to do that. But in recent years I discovered that I was militating against my own cause. Such attitude can be counterproductive. We need to learn from the people at the grassroots. They are transforming their old resistance (a form of defence) into a struggle for liberation. Given the real conditions of the world, we need of course to concentrate a lot of effort on a radical critique of the West: modern science, Europology, etc. But a similar effort should be done to embrace our worlds, to articulate our ideas, to better formulate our alternative philosophies.

Perhaps I can better discuss what bothers me in the dialectic tolerance/hospitality (particularly the tolerance recommended after 11 September). Tolerance means to suffer with patience. The person who tolerates perceives the other as someone who has not the right color of the skin, the proper God, the correct behavior. He feels the generosity of tolerating the other, of suffering him with patience. At times, however, the one who tolerates loses his patience, and is no longer able to tolerate the other. Though more gentle or discreet, tolerance is merely a different form of intolerance.

'Toleration,' Goethe observed, 'ought in reality to be merely a transitory mood. It must lead to recognition. To tolerate is to insult.'

Hospitality, on the other hand, is a recognition, an association, a coming together of an entirely different sort. In being hospitable you recognize the pluralism of reality. You host the other even when you are disagreeing with his arguments, his versions of the multiverse of the real world. To be hospitable does not mean to follow the other, to adopt his views, to affirm or negate him. Hosting the other simply means to open your arms and doors for him and to accept his existence in his own place.

Along these lines, we may think of including in the enterprise the question of the intercultural dialogue, a dialogical dialogue (as Panikkar would say), a dialogue transcending the logos, the conceptual systems of the parties involved. What I am trying to say is that I prefer the mood of liberation (rather than defence or resistance) and hospitality (rather than tolerance). We can open the dialogue once we succeed in what you suggest: to show that science and all the other Western constructions are rooted cultural expressions, particularisms. Once we reduce them to their real condition we will be able to be hospitable towards them, with the kind of hospitality that we claim for ourselves.

The initiative has a clear focus on the Indian Ocean, for obvious reasons. I am ready to participate in your group, in spite of the physical and cultural distance, in spite of the very important obstacle of my Spanglish, in spite of my very firm decision to stay put, in my own place, in the little indigenous village where I live. You cannot start such a complex initiative including everyone. But I wonder: why not to organize something, on the same lines, for Latin America? I can gather a group of people in Mexico, and then in other countries, in order to take a similar initiative, that may operate in Spanish, explicitly intertwined with your initiative. We may walk together a good part of the road: first of all, for our common critique of the West. We may follow different paths while trying to regenerate our own views, philosophies, regions. And we will join again, enjoying the experience of being together and embracing each other, thanks to our

differences – not in spite of them – and thus showing to everyone that there are other ways to relate to each other, as an alternative to homogenization, Westernization.

I can very well connect this line of thinking and action with an initiative that I started at the beginning of this year. After many years of practical attempts to create escape-ways for the educational system, we created a University: it does not have teachers, curricula or classrooms. It combines the regeneration of old practices of apprenticeship with the tradition of the medieval university: peers come together to think on common themes. This University can operate as the institutional space to start something along the lines of your proposal.

I can also see how to connect our research effort of recent years with your proposal. Let me give you an example. Two years ago I organized, with a group of friends, a research to dismantle the very idea of the tropics. Jean Robert wrote a magnificent history, other friends worked with the scientific aspects (it is a perfect example to demonstrate how particular and limited is official science) and so on. We now have a book, ready to be published, showing the construction of the tropics as a colonial enterprise. Of course, it is pretty obvious that you cannot say anything about the area of the globe located between two arbitrary lines, which includes the Sahara dessert, 'tropical' rain forests and the eternal snow of the Himalayas and the most diverse cultures. But Western experts and scientists have taken that area as a real entity, at the service of colonial projects. Furthermore, they have tried to apply their science, conceived in specific areas of the globe, to the so-called tropics. (As you know, the most important research institute on the tropics is in England). I cannot tell you here what we do in the book, but I wanted to mention it to illustrate how much I have been in sync with your initiative.

Please include me in the group. Perhaps I can write something or make any kind of contribution ... and also work in the extension of your initiative to Latin America.

Yosef Progler

Thank you for sending me the proposal and for your kind letter. I read 'Recapturing Worlds' with great interest, and yes, you are correct, we do seem to be 'in sync'. I have been hoping to join such a group of committed scholars to work on just such a project, so please count me in, by all means. Regarding the proposal, it is actually quite wonderful and a pleasure to read. I would only add a few points. For example, Europology perhaps also implies 'Americology' but I think it is important to also centralize critiques of American influences in all forms (many of which are more insidious than European forms), including consumerism. I also think work could be done on 'cultural pedagogy' and especially work that centralizes media culture as a kind of informal education. But in general your prospectus is quite admirable and it would be an honor to be involved in such a project.

Makarand Paranjape

Of course, you can count me in (and, for what it's worth, count on me). It is along these lines that many of us have been working for so long. I've had plenty of thoughts on this but will wait for the appropriate forum for them to be voiced. I will do my best to come to Penang in February, if the first meeting works out.

Rajiv Vora

While I am, as I told you, in general and in principle in agreement with the idea, I do see a danger of driving this enterprise. The corollary danger I see and have often found in the 'indigenous' thinkers is where the Western interpretation and narrative is rejected, but not the expectations, the Western idea about destiny. Do Indian people have a sovereign idea of destiny, and similarly others?

Wouldn't you agree that within the West there is a tradition of its own critique? Finest and strongest critique has come from the West, and no non-Western could do it ever better than the Western except for such like Gandhiji who could transcend the West vs. East duality and could see through Truth and nothing else. While the Western (society, culture, civilisation, its life style, technology, etc.) need to be

exposed in ways in which, rather than helping its internal correction – like the critiques do – it should bring its stocks down, it is equally necessary to look at our societies and cultures from the same yardstick of Truth. Demolition does not come from critique – that is for sure. A demolition squad must have different methods than the doctor – the critiques. While critiques, by the very logic of it, play with the categories of that which they criticise, and therefore provide correctives to that which must be demolished, the standpoint of Truth (and nonviolence) seek the ways of the demolition of the wrong and the remedy of the right.

The failure of our intellectuals – particularly the critics of the West and its modernity – in understanding Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* as anything other than a mere critique of the 'modern, western, industrial civilisation,' is a glaring example of playing a so-called 'anti-West' Western game. What is the reason otherwise for the fact that they have chosen to be selective with Mahatma Gandhi on those fronts where he fights the modernity and the Indian decadence, but they are hardly with him where he presents his 'alternatives,' or, in the main, wherever he explains the validity and truth-efficacy of that body of knowledge which unfortunately has become abused because people called Hindus tried to put it in practice – failed somewhere, succeeded somewhere.

Your point 4 is very important for the purpose of bringing down the stocks of Western modernity. And again when you say 'The general idea is to conduct ... in a wholly clinical manner, just as a modern day pathologist would examine malignant tissue' – I agree, but I often feel that our intellectual language – particularly the diagnostic and the academic language is so completely Westernised that unless the very 'intellectual', 'systematic' so called and academic method of description and prescription is abandoned wholly, no description can link the description of malignancy of the 'Western' with the prescriptive needs for the regaining of non-Western's health. Gandhiji abandoned that language altogether, why otherwise do you think he used such terms as 'asuri' and 'satanic' for describing the West? Hence, need for a new language – a connecting one – and connecting factors are found if the universal is espoused with its specific mani-

festations according to the time and place. Simply put, an academic critique of the Western does not bring the truth home to a Westerner, for through critiques they have plugged the apparent holes. But when the non-academic language of plain truths of life is used for describing their life, it shakes their confidence in the strength and morality of Western modernity.

There are roughly three interpretations or ways of assertion:

One: West is different, we are different: i.e. 'We have our own culture, which is best for us, and it is different from the Western culture. It is good for us because it is ours.'

Two: West is oppressive and therefore what is required is liberation from the West. The submerged and the subjugated must be allowed to surface, the very subjugation-state then grants a tradition, a thought, validity for whatever and howsoever it is. Here the modernists become the spokes high/lower of the native/indigenous/the tradition, and cause its incorporation. Liberation for incorporation.

Three: West and East are only convenient dichotomies. For real universal moral and material progress guidance from the idea of dichotomous East-West duality does not help rebuild us in a world where cultures and thoughts travel worldwide and cross borders in the same fashion as air does – or bad odour and fragrance do.

The running theme is the 'otherness' of the other – in the first two, as it is in the post modernist debate too. Thus, an 'anti' position vis a vis West has a possibility of falling into the post modernist pitfall.

The language of the 'otherness' of the 'other' is what we call political language, although it can and must transcend political and delve into the science of mind-intellect and Self or Atman, in order to understand the Reality or the truth of the 'otherness', but modern Western has not progressed as much in the realm of spirituality as in materiality; or not as much in the science of the real Self the eternal, imperishable, omnipresent Truth, which Gandhiji called God – as it has progressed in the science of the fleeting, unreal self – the perishable and therefore the untruth. To talk of the West only in terms of and in matters of science, technology etc. can

help only so far science and technology have a role in the totality of Life, not beyond. And our problem is mostly about this 'beyond' area. Because that 'beyond-aspect of Life has been erased from our intellectual mind-set and we think that life is only that which is governed by modern science and technology, we often fail to grasp the completeness of the incompleteness of the West and the present incompleteness of the completeness of the East.

I am only posing a problem. With my very limited and unscholarly understanding of the West and as I am posing it, it can be redundant and immature. But in order to arrive at some mature understanding of 'us' and the 'other', I think the relationship between what is universal in both and what is specific must be understood. I think Gandhiji's approach to that 'different' is this. If we can find the common ground on which even the adversary can agreeably stand, then the differences, the 'otherness' falls in place. This common ground is not of *interests* but of certain universal principle or truth.

Attack is best defence, all right; but more than the attack, it is the weapons of attack which guarantee victory.

Concretely –

I would say we need to build our own social sciences, our own *shastras*. That is more important than attacking the Western *shastras*. Where do our 'sutras' for re-building our *shastras* lie? Of course not in the fossils of the *shastras*; but yes, in their principles, in their vision and in their delineation of eternal and the transient. West's presence, or the Western civilisation as it has come up in the cycle of time, sets certain conditions on the development and progress of other or the 'divinising' civilisations. We need to understand these new conditions which did not exist in the same fashion in the times of Vedas or Upanishads or Ramayan or the Mahabharat. They existed in terms of attributes, but the present modern civilisation, sprang up from the Western soil, does have the same attributes as those of the Kingdom of Ravana, but with the forms and facility very different from that. It is only Gandhiji who has given us a contemporary basis for re-shaping our *shastras*, as he has seen through the *contemporary* forms of war between the demoniac and the divine, within the context of the *eternal* war between the two.

He has given the key to contemporisation of our *shastras* in *Hind Swaraj*, then explained throughout his works. Swarajpeeth has taken up the cause of *Hind Swaraj* specifically, from this standpoint. Thus, your idea of writing our own sciences and 'humanities' coincides with our taking up *Hind Swaraj*. The whole idea of centenary is in order to highlight it.

I was last week in Dharamshala doing a workshop of senior political-cultural activists and heads of their institutions, organisations and Government – on nonviolence, with central emphasis on the vision of *Hind Swaraj*. Can you imagine a Buddhist monk of the status of Prof. Samdong Rimpoche, who is No.2 after His Holiness, the PM of the Government in exile, making a clear statement: 'If I have to choose between the Dhammapada and *Hind Swaraj*, I would choose the latter ... I go to it whenever confronted with a difficult situation or a problem, and I unfailingly get guidance.' I have not heard similar thing about *Hind Swaraj* even from any Gandhian.

What I wish to point out is: let every third-world group of Idris's type find out what is their essential text – essential political-cultural and spiritual manifesto. Then the dangers cited earlier will not work. One of the expected projects of our *Hind Swaraj* programme is to find such people in other countries who can, and who must, write their own texts of deliverance – i.e. *Swaraj*. The term Swaraj only reconciles the universal and the personal; the political and the cultural; material and the spiritual, and the private and the corporate; and finally therefore the secular and the religious or the rational and the spiritual.

Can we set understanding of the 'other', the Western, and the liberating the Self in such a mould?

Ashis Nandy

I need not tell you how much I am looking forward to meeting you all in Penang. I thought some excellent responses too have come. I shall very quickly like to make three points.

1. Zia is right; we do not have to do what the West has done to us, but we have the right to redefine and reprioritise

western intellectual culture according to our needs. For instance, I have never understood why Ernst Bloch did not attract South Asian Marxists, given that he had an entirely, much more respectful attitude towards religious traditions. We can deploy a different set of critical standards.

2. Multiversity must be aggressively non-territorial. In fact, it must look at the issue of territoriality differently. When I was working on Cochin and its culture, I found that many in Cochin define their city by its sea routes, not railway or air connections, because that is the way they have traditionally looked at themselves. They find Aden or East Africa or even parts of Europe closer to themselves than Delhi, for instance.

3. This example also prompts me to affirm that history is an overvalued discipline and it is certainly not the only mode of constructing the past in many parts of the southern world. The multiversity project should have the courage to defy history; we have no business to be caught in history even if it is empirically valid. We should concentrate on open-ended constructions of the past. History as a closed, unilinear project was an invention of the European Enlightenment and perfected as a trap by western hegemony.

4. We must look carefully at some of the earlier efforts – good, bad, indifferent – that have been made to pluralise the world of knowledge. Sohail Inayatullah has been working for years on alternative universities. We have run a small research programme on the idea of a South Asian University, for which the main paper was written by Imtiaz Ahmed.

5. Multiversity can be sustained only by plural cultures and plural selves. But there should be a sustained effort to see that the slogan of multiculturalism itself does not become a fashionable adjunct to the Western academic culture. We have no obligation to help the Western academe to hegemonise dissent too; it has already hegemonised conformity.

3

Transcripts of the First Meeting on Multiversity

Haji Mohamed Idris

On behalf of Citizens International, I welcome you warmly to Malaysia, to Penang, and to the discussions that, we hope, will lead to the launch of Multiversity.

The concept of Multiversity may not be entirely new. It has emerged in the past in different forms, as intention and in practice in several societies in Asia, Africa and South America, whenever and wherever conditions for its manifestation have been appropriate. These conditions, almost invariably, have had something to do with the deep resentment people in these societies have felt over the continued domination and exploitation of our societies by economically rich nations, and the implications of such domination. A classic instance is the introduction of basic education schools by Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian freedom struggle.

It cannot be disputed that with the exception of a few minorities, the needs, aspirations and living conditions of the majority of the people on our planet have been subordinated to the wants, aspirations and living standards of very powerful elite groups. This subordination, of course, has had its

consequences not only for the body, but also for the mind and the soul of the people who have been thus victimized and vandalised.

Our worry is the student community, the future.

The world system has perfected a method of training and selection that enables it to recruit for itself, apparently, the brightest and the best, and, after selection, to use such recruits against the interests of the rest. Called 'quality education', it invariably involves pitting thousands and millions of aspirants in a vastly unequal race among themselves to literally fight, by means fair and foul, for the few places displayed as available for those who succeed. Success is understood as largely conformity in all respects with the requirements of modern life, or the rituals of bourgeois civil society. It involves a sacrifice, a self-deprivation of one's inherent right to question, to revolt, to dissent, to create, to be free.

'...The world system has perfected a method of training and selection that enables it to recruit for itself, apparently, the brightest and the best, and, after selection, to use such recruits against the interests of the rest...'

The creative energy of children and youth, from the age of five till the early twenties, is first frozen by suppression, then allowed gradually to atrophy till it appears to disappear completely from their normal life. This exercise is conducted ruthlessly, in all societies in the industrialized world. It has the sanction of parents, the State, the ruling classes, whether political or intellectual. It eventually earns the sanction of the victim as well, when he decides that this is the most attractive option available to him, if he desires to have recognition and approval of the self.

The method through which conformity in ideals is achieved is not even spectacular. On the contrary, it is fairly tedious, if not revolting. For a minimum of fifteen years,

during the individual's youth, when the mind is creative and the spirit wishes to soar, the victim is compelled to read, process and memorise lifeless texts on the grounds that such texts represent science, truth and correct pictures of the real world. The victim is, as a rule, forced to discount his own experience. Every once in a while, the victim is subjected to certification procedures, in the form of examinations, during which he or she is assessed for his/her ability to recognize such texts in detail or repeat them from memory.

The entire exercise is carried out without much serious examination of its content, its validity, its applicability or soundness. During the entire conduct of the certification procedure, there is really no requirement in fact to test the reality component of such 'knowledge'.

Some of these texts are then taken overseas and regurgitated, cut, manipulated, rewritten, allegedly for the benefit of people there. Macaulay laid the basis for the creation of India's education system. Its purpose was overtly stated to be the recruitment of persons of Indian origin to assist the colonial State in the exercise of its power. Similar projects were installed in other enslaved countries as well.

These exercises have continued even after the freeing of these countries from the colonial yoke, on the ground that the system could be converted to serving the ideals of what has been called 'nation-building' – the educated and the trained being 'the building blocks', the nation being 'the building'. With the collapse of the State today, the training setup from university to management institutes and law schools, has become a hunting ground for a global economy directed by the requirements of corporates.

The substitution or subversion of education with training violates the spirit of all that is good in the human race. It violates religious codes, civilisational conduct, and can only be seen as a sign of degradation of the human spirit. Therefore, the modern 'education' system must be shaken at its foundations, in the same manner as earthquakes are known to shake foundations.

There are many questions we need to ask. Like, whose knowledge system is this? What is its purpose? If we did not

'...Whose knowledge system is this? What is its purpose? If we did not create it, how can we be asked to claim it as our own? Why do we reject our own knowledge, the result of centuries of experience and valid, for such knowledge?'

create it, how can we be asked to claim it as our own? Why do we reject our own knowledge, the result of centuries of experience and valid, for such knowledge? What are its assumptions? Have these been scrutinized by any of our intellectuals, secular or religious? What about our own knowledge? If it is valid in our own countries why is it not valid elsewhere? Is our knowledge valid only if re-investigated or patented within the perspective of the modern system?

We need to demand answers. Borrowed knowledge can only enable us to lead borrowed or inferior lives. Gandhi said that anyone guilty of the sin of propagating European civilization should be sent to the penal colony of the Andamans. What punishment can we mete out to educators who commit the indefensible crime of destroying identities, by patronizing homogeneity and suppressing creative freedom?

The Multiversity is being launched to register our firm commitment to working towards the development of independent intellectual traditions within our societies. It is never too late to commence such tasks that ought to have been taken up when we decided to become free beings, during the process of political liberation. I am not suggesting we start from scratch, reinventing the wheel.

What is required is that we carefully examine the politics of knowledge generation and dissemination in our academic institutions and dissect the assumptions behind the sciences we call sociology, psychology, history, political science etc. We should give ourselves the freedom to reject where necessary, all those intellectual disciplines where we find the assumptions are not acceptable to our view of the universe.

Let us draw up concrete plans of how we can take down our present education system, instigate students to rise against the tyranny of dreams pushed by corporate ma-

chines, encourage faculty to rebel against the domination of Western intellectuals and create their own creative universes. We should never allow the Multiversity to degenerate into a talk-shop.

Thinking that does not lead to action is incomplete thinking. Multiversity must be like a banyan tree: support plans for the dismantling of borrowed knowledge, the rejection of unwarranted assumptions, the restoration of our absolute right, as human beings, to our own knowledge; the right to learn, not from texts, but from living and from doing and from simply being ourselves, as God made us. Thank you.

Claude Alvares

I would like to give you some idea of how we are going to proceed in these three days. The bottom line regarding the structure of the meetings is of a conversation. It's not a seminar and we don't want this meeting to degenerate into a seminar. We're not interested in formality at all.

The presentations are going to be made by groups of people who have some expertise in the subject allocated to them. We would like to offer these people an opportunity to tell us what they've done in the last several years on the Multiversity themes. After that we will have a general discussion where everyone can contribute in terms of ideas, disagreement, suggestions etc.

The word 'Multiversity', the patent or the trademark, came from Anwar Fazal. The active proposal 'Recapturing Worlds' was basically drafted seven years ago but for one reason or another lay in cold storage.

Several people have been thinking about these things because the entire structure of academic knowledge in our universities is, when examined closely, so appalling, that it is very difficult to be associated with it.

We've called this meeting so we have people talking, putting things together on how Multiversity should run. Maybe eventually at the end of these three days, we will come out with some very specific things in which we can work out the Multiversity process. But that will again depend on how

much we agree on the things that we should do. What is the area that we have to criticise, what is the area we cannot accept, what we feel is contaminated and what we feel is useless and so on. We have no set agenda in that sense. Specifically what we should do in terms of programs, meetings, how do we interact with university traditions, how do we interact with history congresses, how do we interact with university grants commissions, how do we interact with SAARC and Group 77 and so many other things, that is something that will unwind over the next two or three years. But to start with we need to achieve clarity ourselves.

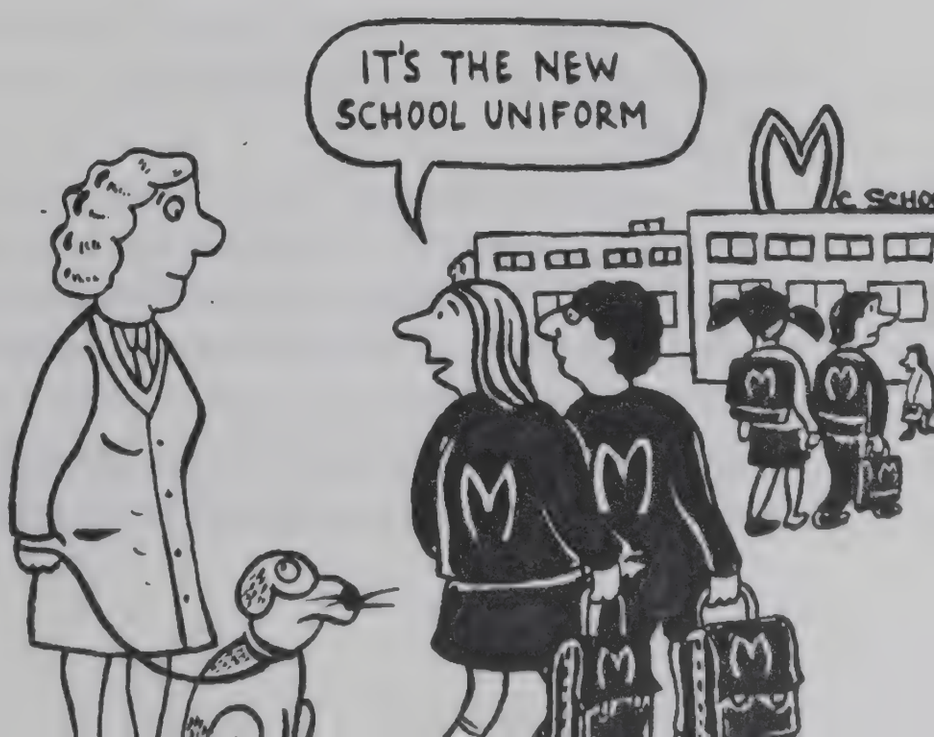
EDUCATION

Shilpa Jain

No one can really think about schools in an ideal sense, in terms like, 'This is a place where people come to learn things that they are interested in, to develop their potential and to relate to one another in cooperative ways.' These are idealized images of what schooling should be, and they are used to justify why all children should be in schools and why parents are committing a crime if they don't send their children to school.

In actual fact 'the culture of schooling' displays the following characteristics:

1. 'Labelling, ranking and sorting of human beings; creating hierarchies; producing elite classes of a few highly educated persons and a large, *large* class of failures.' For instance, there are people today who introduce themselves as, 'I am a 12th class fail or I am an SSC fail.' Your schooling



status becomes your label, alongside your name. So what does that do to the self-esteem, the psyche of human beings?

2. 'Uniformity, standardization.' Everyone must go through the same syllabus, the same curriculum, the same program. Diversity is a problem. In fact, it is very explicitly stated in many government documents that one of the things that stands in the way of universalization of basic elementary education is diversity. Diverse human languages, cultures, knowledges: these become problems if we are going to try to get everyone into standard schools. So, therefore, we should try to eliminate them as much as possible.

3. 'Spreading fear, insecurity, violence and silence.' The culture of silence is embedded in schooling. There is little or no scope for asking questions, much less dissenting.

4. 'Widespread and cutthroat competition.' Examination, certificates, jobs, are the sole assessments and outcomes of learning in schools. The effect of these on children and families and society has been pretty well documented.

5. 'Commodifying human beings, nature, knowledge, social relationships.' The assumption is that everything we have should have a price tag on it. And in today's market economy, preferably, a dollar value. We should be able to say that this tree, or this acreage of land, is worth this much money; this kind of knowledge is worth more than the rest, especially if it's modern science (which is usually given a much higher price than any other form of knowledge). Basically, everything should be able to be bought and sold. Of course, once everything is packaged, it can only be bought and sold by a select few.

6. 'Fragmenting and compartmentalizing knowledge, and de-linking knowledge from wisdom, practical experiences and contexts.'

7. 'Separating rationality from emotions and spirit.' Since the dominant model of knowledge only considers rationality as important, other human connections, emotions, feelings, values, spiritual perspectives etc. are not really valued in the culture of schooling.

8. 'Literacy is privileged over all other forms of expression.' This not only devalues the many other ways in which

We are told that there are only certain people, certain places, certain ideas, certain books and certain kinds of sources that you can go to, to actually become educated.

humans express themselves – through music, art, dance, stories, etc., – but it also determines our sources of information. Once literacy takes supremacy, it is only through textbooks, or newspapers, or television, that we get our information. Again, these are controlled by a particular apparatus, a particular elite.

9. 'Reducing spaces and opportunities for human learning by funnelling them through a centrally controlled institution.' This idea of a funnel, a single source or space of valid knowledge, is very important to the modern education system. We are told that there are only certain people, certain places, certain ideas, certain books and certain kinds of sources that you can go to, to actually become educated. This is not only a great myth, but it creates a sense of dependency alongside. The myth says, 'If you are not in touch with those people, those places, those texts, then you cannot become "educated".' This means therefore that you have to always find the expert, the institution, the key text that will give you the knowledge that you need to become part of that elite group.

10. 'Devaluing the dignity of labour.'

11. And lastly: 'Breaking the bonds of family and community and making people more dependant on the nation-state, government, science, technology and the market.' This dependency is not only related to peoples' livelihood, in terms of how they're going to survive, but also for their identity, in terms of who they are today. So I am a 'citizen', a 'consumer', a 'professional' – those are my identities, and all the other forms and ways in which we understand ourselves and each other, as parents, as children, as siblings, as creators, as questioners, etc. those are discounted or made irrelevant.

This culture of schooling manifests itself in many, many different ways, and I would never limit it to just schools. You

can see many of these elements in the mass media; in the way government relates to us as human beings, or in the way we are taught to relate to nature, the market and the corporate sector.

So whatever we do, we need to understand the link to the larger system. We must be extremely critical and extremely conscious of that system, and not try to create a vacuum for ourselves, because we are obviously still a part of that system, to some extent or another. We have to continuously see how we are working to subvert that, resist that, as well as generate and regenerate other kinds of possibilities.

I also want to share a little bit about what we at Shikshantar have been doing in Udaipur and what kinds of processes we think the Multiversity can engage in, with us and through us, to see where else we can go.

One aspect is around unlearning, decolonizing, resisting, questioning, challenging. I think these words go together, in terms of facing the kinds of assumptions, institutions, systems, values, knowledge, before us. They relate to understanding the glasses that we have been wearing, the various kinds of lenses through which we have been looking at the world, to begin to question and expose them. In and of itself, this is a process of dismantling them. Coinciding with this decolonizing and unlearning are processes of self-learning and co-learning. In other words, how do we actually connect with one another or even reconnect with ourselves, our spirits, our emotions, our experiences, and our expressions? This form of connection and reconnection can ultimately enable us to generate other kinds of possibilities for learning, knowing and doing.

Somebody comes up with an idea, usually from somewhere in the US or Europe, and then we in the South all work very hard to implement it, to make sure it comes out just right, just as planned. But in the role of the implementer, we are essentially slaves – mental slaves, and sometimes even physical slaves.

Another aspect is the difference between implementation and co-creation. A lot of the work in education has been around implementation. Somebody comes up with an idea, usually from somewhere in the US or Europe, and then we in the South all work very hard to implement it, to make sure it comes out just right, just as planned. But in the role of the implementer, we are essentially slaves – mental slaves, and sometimes even physical slaves. And this role cannot really do much to generate other ways of learning and living, or critiques of the larger system.

So at Shikshantar, we focus more on a process of co-creation. Co-creating means engaging lots of people, of various ages, various backgrounds, various kinds of interests, and letting them together unfold a process, whether it's a learning space, whether it's a kind of media or whether it's a dialogue. There has to be a lot of patience, and there has to be time. There also has to be the absence of planning and control, because co-creation really depends upon an organic unfolding of ideas and experiences. It can't be dictated according to a certain time constraint, or a certain funding constraint, or certain performance goals, or all of the things that characterize development and education today.

I am going to share with you a couple of examples of some of the things we've done in Shikshantar, to give you a sense of where we can go with the Multiversity. There are some African students in India, in contact with us, who are preparing a publication called *The Counter Renaissance*. There is a programme going on right now in Africa called 'the African Renaissance,' which is being pushed by elites in South Africa, as well as various technology corporations and development agencies. Our African friends who have been interacting with us, unlearning and trying to question this model of development, decided to share their own experiences and ideas, and the ideas and experiences of other African intellectuals, poets, activists, etc., to counter and expose this Renaissance and recover other, Africa-based ways of living and learning. They are trying to do this through writing and by creating their own media. This is one example.

Another example is our work with Mewari, which is the language of Udaipur and the region around Udaipur, called

Mewar. This work is related to local media, to language and to the significance of people's own learning experiences and expressions, especially storytelling. We published a collection of Mewari stories titled *Kani Ke Re Kagla*, printed 1,000 copies of it, and have found that it has been going around from home to home and has reached an estimated 5,000 homes. We understand, it has actually helped to revitalize the local tradition of sharing stories, which has been under attack and on the verge of extinction, because of schooling and television, and also because of an economic structure which prioritizes Hindi and English. Elders and adults in Mewar are beginning to share some of their stories with their children again. People are also trying to write stories in Mewari.

Sharing stories has branched out into sharing songs as well. Mewar is also very famous for its 'proverbs' (it's the best translation I've come up with in English), and these too are being shared through local media. The work is centred around how we generate, share these oral traditions, and link them together, because there is tremendous wisdom in these stories, proverbs, songs, etc. One important point to note is that we have not tried to standardize Mewari in this process. Instead, people write in various forms of Mewari. They use different words for the same object, or different sounds for the same word, but we have not tried to 'correct' peoples' language. The idea is that you should be able to express yourself as you like. This is another example of regenerating and learning through local language.

I also want to talk briefly about a process we are engaged in called 'Udaipur as a Learning City', which is attempting to do many things at once. Our work with Mewari is part of it, as are different kinds of unlearning workshops with children, with youth, inter-generational workshops with adults and seniors, and even with teachers, if and when they are interested. 'Udaipur as a Learning City' also involves different kinds of community media and community discussions. For instance, recently, children from the Narmada valley had been on a 'Jeevan Yatra' ('life trip'), visiting from city to city, to share what was happening in the Narmada valley. They came to Udaipur, and we hosted them. They held discussions with various citizens of Udaipur, in which people reflected on

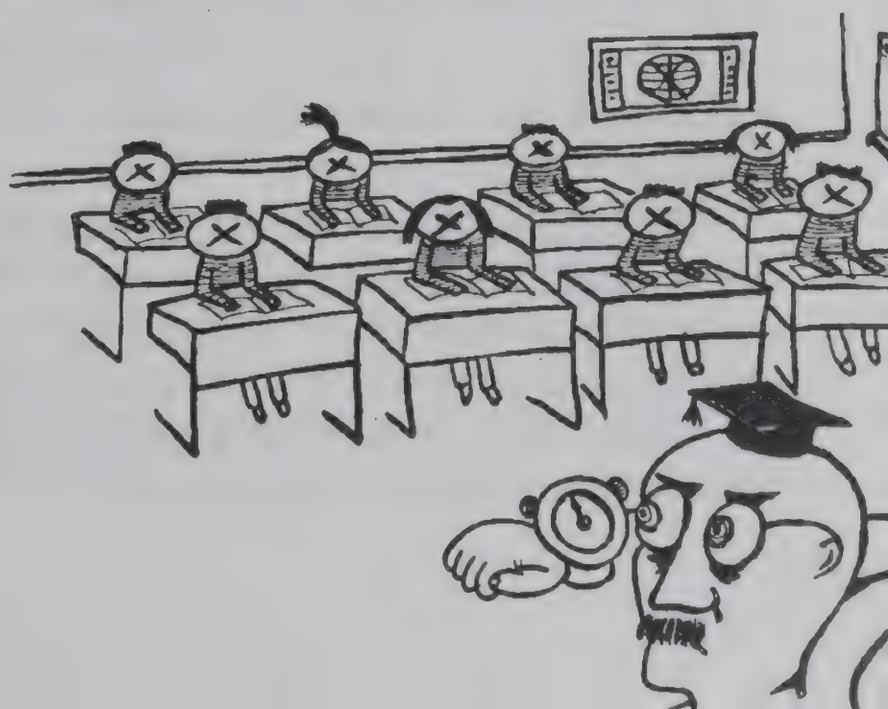
their experiences, with Narmada-like issues in Udaipur: for example, the kinds of crises we are facing vis-à-vis the marble industry or tourism. So the community discussion involved making a connection between the struggles that are happening in different parts of the country due to development.

The last thing I shall share is our work of collecting young people's unlearning stories, their stories of resistance. A lot of young people out there are not happy with the system; they are not satisfied; they don't want to go into it. They are standing on the fringe but they don't see any other options. Therefore, we decided to collect and share with them the stories of people who have made choices, who have found or created other options. These stories show how such people began to understand the system, how they began to de-link themselves from it, how they began to question it, what kinds of processes they are currently engaged in, how are they helping to further unlearning processes for other people, and how they are working to create a more harmonious existence, a more ecologically balanced life, a meaningful life, a fuller life. The sheer diversity of experiences that people have had while questioning and challenging the system, has been truly remarkable.

Pawan Gupta

Let me begin with that I feel is essentially wrong with our education system. Basically it has crushed our self esteem and the self confidence which comes from within and not by comparing ourselves to others. In Hindi it is called *sapeksh atmavishwas* or *nirpeksh atmavishwas*. The education system has also reduced the spaces of solidarity.

So the problem is how do we restore our self-confidence, our self esteem, and how do we find the spaces of solidarity once again.



In our tradition, education, is divided into two broad spheres: one is *para* and the other is *apara*. *Para* is defined as that which we understand and then we do. It means education which helps us to understand and then from that understanding, act accordingly. *Apara* i.e. the skills mode, is where we keep on doing what we are taught to do, and the more we do, the more we learn or improve. The present education system confines itself, by and large, to this second mode. For e.g. I'm speaking to you now and maybe if I speak ten times, then I will speak better.

Our present education system does not at all or largely touch *para*. The way we understand has been taken over by the system. We are told that there is that object out there that we have to understand. The reality lies only in the object. Our education shows us how to understand that object in the way the system defines it and till we come to that understanding, we are uneducated. That's how the control begins.

But again, in our tradition we have something called *dhrishti*. In English, the closest translation would be perception. Now in this traditional understanding we say that there is the object, I am the observer and I always understand through the *dhrishti*. So my reality is what lies in the object, plus the *dhrishti*, these two, combined, make my observation. And that is always there. The only difference is that sometimes we are aware of the *dhrishti*, sometimes we are not. Modern education makes us assume that *dhrishti*/perception is not there. When I am the one who has to understand the object, the reality is multidimensional, but when I am told the reality of the object only lies in the way education is telling me, the multidimensional character of reality gets reduced to a few dimensions which are shown by the text books, etc., so we end up seeing only that which is in the interest of the systems that be.

The assumption behind the act of doing is that we will derive some kind of happiness from doing it. What the modern systems have done is that they have defined certain objects as if they will give us that happiness. So in a restrictive sense, certain means have been projected as if they are the objects. Object is happiness but then the means have

when we asked the same question in a different way, i.e 'are you happy with the products of this education system?' most of them said no, we are not happy. They used the phrase *barbadh ho gaye* or *bigad gaye*, which means they've been ruined or spoilt by the education system.

replaced the objects by saying if you acquire this knowledge or that object, then you will become happy. So, in a way, the object itself has been completely sidelined. This again is a way of control.

We did some research a few years ago on how people see education, and we asked them broadly two questions. One was: 'Are you going to send your children to school?' By and large everyone from rural to urban areas said: 'Yes, we want to send our children to school.' There were very few who said we don't want to send our children to school.

The second question was 'What is a good school according to you?' In reply they gave us broadly the same picture as it exists today in India. A person from an urban, high income group would draw a public school picture, a person in the rural area would draw a slightly different kind of a picture, but by and large it was the same thing which is going on. However when we asked the same question in a different way, i.e 'are you happy with the products of this education system?' most of them said no, we are not happy. They used the phrase *barbadh ho gaye* or *bigad gaye*, which means they've been ruined or spoilt by the education system.

So, they are not happy with the outcome, yet they all want to send their children to school.

This kind of a conflict was there everywhere and when we analyzed it in this frame, we felt that the present system by telling us that the reality is out there, is moulding our beliefs in a very restrictive fashion. Therefore we tend to believe that schools are good and we cannot do without schools. But we cannot help the experiences, the experiences are multidimensional, so the experience always mismatches the reality as it is being shown.

What we have been trying to do in SIDH is to take cognisance of the fact that there is a *dhrishti* all the time with us. And when we take cognisance of this fact, my reality is a created reality. Therefore I become an active player in this whole process of creation. I am no longer a passive observer, a part in the whole machine of development where I have to only play a certain role that has been defined by the others for me. I can also change the reality according to my own understanding.

Yusef Progler

This is an ideal time in history to be talking about education. There is a global argument going on now about education and this is an important time to interject new voices. I think that the educational system that we are all talking about is basically a Western educational system that came to us through colonization in different times and places. The uniformity of this system is astounding: from India, to the Arab world, to the United States, it is uniform but at the same time today there's an uncertainty about the future of that uniform system.

Sometimes this system is called 'factory schooling.' Factory schooling was designed to produce factory workers. It thrives on fear, boredom and obedience. People started saying that factory schools were outdated, that we need something for a 'post-industrial society.' So schools, under the rubric of being 'reformed,' started adopting the ideology of consumerism and replacing fear and boredom with fun and games or replacing obedience with forms of disobedience, with the commodification of transgression as an educational act. In response to this consumerist kind of education, schools started emphasizing games, fun, toys, balloons, candy bars, cartoon characters, all in effort to do something about the excruciating boredom that the factory system foisted on children for a century.

Sometimes this system is called 'factory schooling.' Factory schooling was designed to produce factory workers. It thrives on fear, boredom and obedience.

But now people have started feeling that kids aren't learning anything with fun and games so now there's an attempt to say, 'wait a minute, let's' go back to the factory system, bring it back in, but this time it will be the new standards movement.' It is getting adopted in places like the USA, UK, South Africa, Australia, retrenching the factory system under a new guise called 'Outcome Based Education.'

My question is, why do we continue to follow these fads and trends when they come to us through distant experts, or through people who go to the West for training, when those in the West are unsure of themselves in the first place. The West is trying to retrench or redefine itself and get everybody else to join in, even though they don't know where they're going. It's an ideal time to take a detour, to slow down, to stop, to ask questions, to come up with something different.

One of the things that needs to happen is a form of adult education or reeducation, because parents are the ones that are sending their children to school. So we can't only focus on what we are going to do with the kids or what we are going to do with the students. We also have to focus on the people who are actually seeing that educational system as somehow useful or valuable and in the absence of anything else they opt for it. So there needs to be a kind of 'back to school' for everybody. We need some kind of reeducation program for those of us who thought that we finished school.

Another thing that has to happen is we need to broaden the discussion beyond curriculum. A lot of the discussions on education focus on what to learn i.e curriculum. I think this falls short of the goal. There are two key areas that we need to discuss when designing a new model of education. First, what is the relationship between education and vocation, or work, or something that you are going to do with your education. Do we still need to define education as book learning or as training for middle-level management, bureaucratic positions like the old colonial system, or can we link education as a concept to other things. So what is really the relationship between, education and vocation?

With vocation, there's good work and there's bad jobs; the factory system largely trained people for bad jobs. Can we

design an educational system, or a model, or a paradigm that is going to centralize the idea of good work as opposed to preparing people for bad jobs?

Second, what values does the educational system, centralize? We need to focus not just on cultural values but also things like an environmental ethic. Someone said that all education is environmental education. What it means is that, one way or another, you're learning how to relate to your environment through the schooling that you obtain. The present education is teaching you to relate to your environment in a largely destructive way. It's the Cartesian, Baconian, materialistic, competitive, consumerist way in which we are trained to relate to our natural environment, as something to be killed, used, exploited, *but without saying it that way*. Instead, we say that it's progress, it's development. So, can we centralize an environmental ethic as part of the value system of a new program of education?

Another thing that has to be thought about is what do we do with the existing system? Do we work within the system or do we work without the system? I think that probably both have to happen. Within the system, there are some interesting things happening along the lines of interdisciplinary education, trying to break the compartmentalization of knowledge and recombining it into different ways, breaking this sort of hegemonic grip of the disciplines, on knowledge construction and recombining them. We call this interdisciplinary education. I think that's a good place for those of us who are working within the system to emphasize as a subversion of the compartmentalization of knowledge, because interdisciplinarity is something that's to a certain extent still accepted in academia.

The second area to 'subvert' is to rejuvenate or salvage what is called in the West the 'ethnic studies' programmes, or more recently 'studies of indigenous knowledge', not as a little sort of decorative fluff that they put in departments but as something that is central to an academic institution. We should make more places for such studies in the institutions that we are in, as a subversive tactic within the system.

The third area is to bring into our institutions people who have their validity from outside the institutions. Don't repro-

In New York City they have their programme called 'City-as-School', where high school students spend only one or two days a week in the traditional school setting, where they do some reading/writing/arithmetic, traditional school stuff, but the other three or four days they are out in the city, because the city is the school.

duce the system by only inviting other professors as consultants or visiting lecturers or whatever, but bring people who have their validity from somewhere outside of the educational system.

These are some ideas for working within the system of institutionalized education.

As far as working outside of that system, I am at a loss here because I'm still institutionalized myself. But I've seen some interesting things happening. In New York City they have their programme called 'City-as-School', where high school students spend only one or two days a week in the traditional school setting, where they do some reading/writing/arithmetic, traditional school stuff, but the other three or four days they are out in the city, because the city is the school. In the city they work in community service, they work in apprenticeships, they do research projects, they work in soup kitchens, public service, all sorts of different things as a way to explore life, to explore vocation, to try to find 'who am I and where do I fit into the world.' The idea is to have less school and more time for living or learning to live life, and learning to relate to your community.

That's something I thought was really fascinating and interesting – spending time outside the traditional setting but keeping the links to what one might call spaces of solidarity, reclaiming those existing collective spaces called 'schools' and connecting them to life. In other words, since we might not want to completely destroy the institutional solidarity that can happen from the schooling system, the City-as-School takes away a good part of the time that students

would otherwise spend in school but keeps some of the benefits of having an institution with infrastructure and things of that sort.

Finally, we've got to do something about the age segregation of public schooling. I think that's a barbarism in human history. What happened to intergenerational communication? Is there a place in our project for what we might want to call intergenerational communication? Instead of lumping all the seven year olds together, and giving them a certificate so they can move on to the eight year old slot or whatever, can we mix that up somehow? I think that traditional wisdom has always been passed along as a form of intergenerational communication and I think we need to bring that back.

Discussion

Claude: I'd like to ask a question regarding the issue of certification. The whole of education today has degenerated into certification. How far will we succeed if we disassociate and disconnect certification from education. Are there any efforts on these lines?

Yusef: That's a tough one: do we dump the whole thing right away or not? I don't know. That's why I'm saying, for those of us who work in the system, we need to try to subvert that system. If people are still going to pursue PhDs, lets try to create PhDs in areas that don't exist now, at least as a way to break the model of disciplinarity while still keeping in mind the insecurity that we have of working without certification.

All traditional educational systems have some way to certify people when they've learned something but it's the Western way that we've all adopted, where you get assigned a rank. True, its a piece of paper, it's formalized and it's depersonalised. But if you think about it, if you're in a craft or guild, you get certified to some extent by being able to produce the craft or the art that the elders taught. In religious colleges in the Islamic world they have ways of certifying people which are more linked to individual communication between people than to abstract degrees.

Now the hard thing about certification is that the Western system travels very well right now. That's their real achievement, that they give you a piece of paper and then

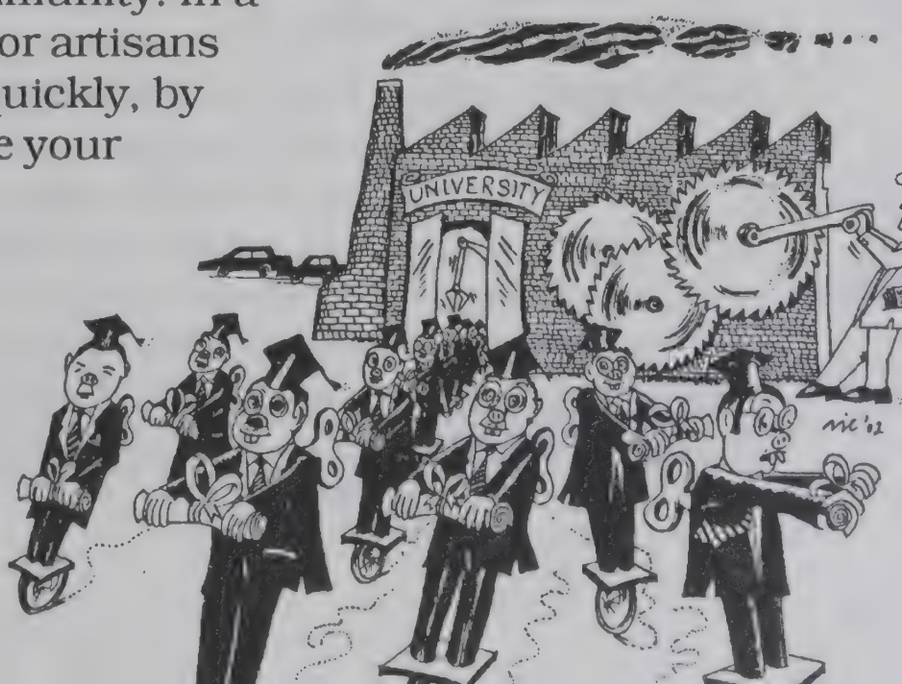
they create a global system that basically accepts that piece of paper wherever you go. And that's going to be a tough one to crack. Without another system in place that people can step into and function somehow, I don't really know if we want to abandon certification right away. I am sort of on the fence on that one

Claude: Take computer education – not computer education in terms of a person going to a computer institute and getting a degree, but take the way people have learnt to operate computers today. Mothers and grandmothers and all sorts of people are sitting today with computers and they've mastered it and none of them are certified. The only guys who are certified are those who go in for software programming and so on but the entire computer education that has been going on all over the world, the ability to handle a computer and ordinary computer programs and the self learning that is going on involves no certification whatsoever. How did that happen?

Shilpa: I disagree with Yusef. I don't think that there is much use for maintaining a certification program in the Multiversity. First of all, whenever you have it in front of you, it reduces everything you do to obtaining the certificate. So opportunities for creativity, opportunities for being innovative, for thinking outside of that system, get greatly reduced. This certification question is really a question about evaluation. And then the question is, who gets to evaluate who? why? on what grounds? and to what purpose?

I don't think that evaluation is a problem in itself. For example, as members of the Multiversity, we can see if our work actually meets the kinds of standards we've decided to set up as a collective community. In a community of craftsmen or artisans you are evaluated quite quickly, by whether or not people like your products.

In academia, the problem is that there is little scope for anyone, outside of the boundaries of that



discipline, to evaluate one's work. So, people can produce whatever they want, and it doesn't matter whether anybody likes it or not, because there is this boundary, this strange value of 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' – whatever that means. In academia, all one has to say is, 'I am contributing to the body of human knowledge,' as opposed to saying, 'What I do has value in the context of relationships with people or in connection with communities.'

I also think that certification can very easily be bypassed. For example, we could say that it is all nonsense and make it so. We could say that if you have to certify one thing, then you should just certify everything, which then degrades the value of certification. Or, you could take another stance and say, 'I should be judged by the value of my work and my contribution, but there are many people to judge it.' Portfolios are one approach that has emerged, in which people share their writing with other people, who give feedback, which goes into their portfolio. These 'evaluators' are usually peers and/or non-experts, who do not belong to a central agency. There is also self-assessment, which often is even more valuable, because people themselves must cultivate self-discipline and a sense of value.

Today, for example, resumes or skills are given much more value than degrees in some situations. If you can demonstrate that you can use a computer, or that you know how to engage with different kinds of people, or you've done a particular kind of writing – that actually has more value than a degree. So I'm *not* on the fence, because I think supporting a certification process will actually end up undermining the other goals of self-motivation, self-discipline, creativity and regeneration, and it will once again force us to be controlled by this external authority.

Makarand: I think that the real issue is whether or not we can market this idea of doing away with certification. As I see it, there are two types of people that we're dealing with: some have the initiative, the creativity or the gumption to survive, no matter what. They break through the system, the system can't break them in, can't destroy them. They are always rebels, they are transgressors. Somehow they survive although sometimes they could also be crushed by the system

(e.g. creative people who become alcoholics). But these are not the regular, typical sort of people. So I don't think we need to concern ourselves with them at this point.

The other is the normal kind of person who gets into the system solely in order to get a job. What do you do with that person who needs the certificate? It seems to me that without creative alternatives to the system, if you just throw out certification, then you're not really giving people the where-withal to build their lives.

Now I know of only two experiments where they've tried to build alternative systems. One is by Gustavo Esteva's group in Mexico who have created an alternate university which empowers people and also gives them this alternative certification. Suppose somebody wants to become, say, a car mechanic. He is given a curriculum which is really going to help him learn to fix a car. The person is also sent to do an apprenticeship in an actual garage. So, at the end of this 'education process' this person becomes a very competent mechanic and knows how to fix all the cars that are running in that particular society. This alternate university then gives this person a certificate stating that he is now a qualified mechanic. He can now go and get a job in that community to fix cars. That's one system.

The other system I know of is the *swadhyaya* system. In that *tathvagyan vidyapeeth* they only take people who have ten acres of land in order to ensure that at the end of the education he will go back to the land. Here they have decided not to give the person a degree because if he/she gets a degree the person will be tempted to go to the city and try to become a clerk or something of that sort. So the *swadhyaya* system consciously seeks to make the person unemployable in the mainstream so that he/she goes back to the farm. The education is called *rishi krishi*. It seems to

work because these people have a farm to go back to, where they will be self employed. It is a kind of value oriented education with traditional agricultural practices, some technical education plus present day outlook and world views which will help them become better farmers at the end of the day.

So what is important for Multiversity is what we are able to offer in place of the present certification system. Suppose we say that this person in addition to having gone to JNU or wherever is also certified by Multiversity or has gone through the Multiversity program, what will that mean? Or if somebody says, I have this Multiversity certificate, diploma, whatever you want to call it, what can that actually translate into? That, for me, is the crucial question.

Shilpa: I think that if we get into the same mind frame, that we are going to have one system for everyone, then we've already defeated the purpose of the Multiversity. Because then you demand standardization, you demand certification, you demand an external authority, you demand a market economy which those graduates are going to feed into. So if we're talking about that, then I think there are a few different conversations going on at the same time. If you're thinking about mass-produced graduates for a mass economy, then you have to fall into the trap of certification. That's exactly the trap it created for itself, to make it indispensable. So if you're going to buy into the paradigm of the techno-industrial economy, then yes, you need certification.

But if we're questioning that paradigm – which I think is part of the purpose of this process – then I think we have to be able to question not only certification, but even this idea that some people are intelligent and some are not, that some people are capable and some are not, that some people have potential and some people don't. We have to be willing to question something that is indoctrinated in us, this belief in IQ.

Ashis: I would like to point out that in the case of India, according to available data, roughly 70% of Indians are engaged in agronomy of various forms which does not require certification. Another 18–20% are involved in artisan crafts which do not require certification. Three to four percent do

not do anything even in the traditional system. So I would suggest that if 95% of India can do this without this certification, we should have some space for surviving without certification too. So let's keep both options open.

HISTORY

Vinay Lal

Before I move into more intricate matters I want to make a few, very elementary distinctions. The first is that history is one of those words which is used to designate not simply what transpired in the past, or what happened in the past but the practice of writing and thinking about the past. So if one is engaged in history, one is engaged in the practice of writing and thinking about the past, about traditions of historical enquiry and so on. The bulk of my comments today are going to be about the practice of history, i.e. how do we think about history and what are its philosophical, epistemological suppositions.

I teach in a history department. I am probably the only person in the history department at my university who has consistently argued against history i.e., for anti-historicism. So I'm speaking from within the profession and against the grain and consequently am engaging in a different kind of intellectual exercise.

The word history really acquires a particular resonance in the eighteenth century. But before we move to the eighteenth century, it's important to mention a rather brute fact which many educated elites in India find unpleasant and that is that India is one civilization that never really bothered much with history. This argument was first advanced in the early nineteenth century by British colonial writers such as James Mill who wrote a very large work called the *History of British India* in which he stated that it was rather unfortu-

nate that Indians lack a historical sensibility because the most eminent mark or sign of rationality of people is to have a historical sensibility. So if India lacks a historical sensibility, then from his standpoint, this suggests that India is in fact less evolved.

I accept the argument that Indians lacked a historical sensibility but I do not accept the Mill's reasoning. I believe that this was in fact an attitude cultivated quite deliberately by Indians. No one can doubt that Indians had analytical capacity. One only has to look at the huge range of texts on mathematics, astronomy, literature, philosophy, theology and so on that one finds in premodern or ancient India, for it to be abundantly clear that production of such texts obviously required a great degree of analytical thinking. So the argument that history has not been important to India is very crucial, because it presents us with an example of how we can disassociate ourselves from a dominant (or what will subsequently become a dominant) way of thinking for the entire world.

This leads me to the second general proposition from which the rest of my talk will evolve, and that is that history is now the dominant paradigm. This means that if you ask the question, 'is there a people that doesn't want to be with a history,' (I'm referring obliquely to a very famous book written by Eric Wolfe, *Europe and the people without history*), the answer would be no, there isn't a single people who wants to be without a sense of history. The most offensive thing that you can tell people who have not ordinarily been included within the orbit of history is that they don't in fact have a history.

If you look at ancient Greece, around the eighth century B.C., you had a major writer by the name of Herodotus, one of whose works that has survived is a book called *The Histories*. About three centuries later around fifth century B.C. there was Thucydides whose main argument is that the problem with Herodotus is that there is too much myth in his histories. What better way for one historian to discredit another than to designate his work as myth.

So, there was a point in time, even in the West, when in fact history and myth were not in fact actually divorced from

each other and the West actually feels a necessity to disassociate and desegregate history from myth. Of course the question that arises is – what are the criteria by which you desegregate history from myth, and are these criteria scientific?

Now this leaves unanswered the question as to why a certain people were comfortable with a discourse that did not have to desegregate history and myth and whether in fact we too could be comfortable with not having to desegregate the two in the way in which it seems to me we moderns want to now do so increasingly.

As an academic discipline, history really gets effectively established only in the late eighteenth century, which is when in fact many of the academic disciplines in Europe were beginning to acquire the characteristics of a modern discipline e.g. having a professoriate, a certain form of certification, academic journals and so on.

In India, in the early nineteenth century as I have already pointed out, James Mill already advanced an argument about the importance of historical thinking. It begins to have a profound impact on Indian nationalists. For example take Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a Bengali novelist and writer in the late nineteenth century who is most often talked about in this context. Bankim has this rather famous quotation where he says that if an Englishman is going out on a hunting expedition and during that time he happens to sneeze, takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and he blows his nose into it, he'll record these facts for posterity. On the other hand in India, we had great battles, we had great kings but we never bothered to record many of these things for posterity. So he's contrasting the minutiae of European history with the fact that we are indifferent to even large events. He sets up this contrast and argues that in fact in order to be a proper nation-state, one has to have a historical sensibility which means a certain kind of historical literature. And the argument that if we don't have a historical sensibility and don't have a historical practice we cannot be considered to be a proper nation-state, gets widely accepted within discourses of Indian nationalism.

What he was trying to suggest was that people who are trying to demonstrate that the Mahabharat ought to be taken seriously as a historical narrative are in fact people who have been, colloquially speaking, colonized.

It seems to me that this is a part of the problem of the colonised world, namely, that all of us are in a sense striving to be proper subjects of a proper nation-state. The only person who effectively dissented from this model is Gandhi, who not only makes a very strong argument for what you might call anti-historicism, but he also manifests a sheer indifference to what we might call the products of history, i.e., the products of historical practice and the whole idea of historical practice.

Just to give you one example: when Gandhi was once asked what he thought about the Mahabharat being a true historical record of what had transpired in India at a certain point in time, he said that frankly he couldn't care less whether in fact the Mahabharat actually features true historical events or not. What he was trying to suggest was that people who are trying to demonstrate that the Mahabharat ought to be taken seriously as a historical narrative are in fact people who have been, colloquially speaking, colonized.

Now let me take a slightly different trajectory for the moment because we have to consider what has transpired in the last three decades in the discipline of history.

In the Euro-American world and the Anglo-American world, the most significant development within the discipline of history has been the accommodation of various kinds of ethnic and marginalized histories. I use the word 'accommodation' deliberately because that already suggests the severe limitations of that kind of approach. There is a certain tolerance for diversity and minority histories, but this tolerance is always from a position of feeling elevated. It's not a hospitable way of thinking about the rest of the world. I want to suggest to you that this paradigm of ethnic studies and ethnic histories that has been set up in the last two or three decades in

the United States, in Britain and to some degree in European countries as well, reflects a rather impoverished conception of ecumenism and pluralism.

This accommodation takes shape in various ways, with various kinds of theoretical movements and influences (post structuralism, post-colonial theory). To put it in a nutshell, there is an attempt to pluralize the dominant conception of history. However one of the problems is that whatever you do, you must still operate within the framework that has been already set up. If you think of, for example, a painting within a frame, what this argument suggests is that you may be able to rearrange what you put inside the frame, substitute one painting for another or take fragments of another painting, make a pastiche out of it but what ever you do, you do not to do away with the frame. In other words only certain kinds of dissenting views pertaining to the practice of history will be permitted within that dominant paradigm.

Now let me advert very briefly to two recent developments in history that are usually championed by people who see themselves as extremely progressive, extremely liberal. One is the development of world history and the other is interdisciplinary history. I have critiqued both these models.

To critique world history is to appear to be like the obdurate native who doesn't like development. One is seen as being churlish, parochial and provincial. After all, instead of doing the history of only Europe in the eighteenth century,

One problem is that world history seeks to increase commensurability between knowledges. It puts within its orbit those who have been formerly excluded. It's a way of capturing their worlds but we have to understand the consequences and ramifications that emanate from this position. What I am suggesting is that world history is a well intentioned but in fact insidious way of colonialism, a way in which the practice of history now extends much further than what colonialism could do in real practice.

we're doing world history, why should that be a problem for somebody coming from India like myself?

One problem is that world history seeks to increase commensurability between knowledges. It puts within its orbit those who have been formerly excluded. It's a way of capturing their worlds but we have to understand the consequences and ramifications that emanate from this position. What I am suggesting is that world history is a well intentioned but in fact insidious way of colonialism, a way in which the practice of history now extends much further than what colonialism could do in real practice.

I think one of the principal endeavours of Multiversity should be incommensurability. There are some kinds of conversations we don't want with some people. I think that that should be part of the principle of Multiversity.

Interdisciplinarity also has certain kinds of problems. It is no accident that if you look at interdisciplinarity, it is one of the few arenas where the extreme right and the extreme left in the American academia converge. Both agree on the need for interdisciplinarity. The extreme right does so because it believes that education should be holistic and based on the old model of the liberal arts education – we've got too much compartmentalization, we do not know enough about the rest of the world and so on. The extreme left does so precisely because identity politics has become crucial to the American university. Not only the American university but in fact the Anglo American University and to some degree Europe as well. Interdisciplinarity of course is also a way in which you can market the university better now than you could before. In fact, one of the things one notices at all major research American Universities is that the chancellors or presidents of these Universities literally shout themselves hoarse about the need for interdisciplinarity.

But look at what the practice of interdisciplinarity really includes. I critique interdisciplinarity because it is repeating the follies of more than one discipline in one's own work. You repeat the follies of all the disciplines that you work in when you start doing interdisciplinarity work because what in fact interdisciplinarity fails to do is to question the way in which all formal knowledge became segmented into certain disci-

plines and why is it that disciplines have these boundaries and so on.

If you look at India for example, it seems to me that the most successful group of Indian academics, particularly overseas, has been the subaltern group of Indian historians. One of the reasons why the subaltern school has in fact gained a certain legitimacy in the West is precisely because they do not question the epistemological suppositions of history. Subaltern studies basically work on the same model that the colonialists did i.e. use a set of Western theorists (Gramsci, Foucault, Derrida, Levi-Strauss) even if your raw material is Indian. They would never for example think of using Gandhi's practice and theory of sexuality to interrogate Foucault's history of sexuality. They would use Foucault's history of sexuality to understand Gandhi's but they would never do the reverse. These are the kinds of limitations that you find incorporated within the present practice of history.

Discussion

Nagarajan: People talk about unity in theory, historical unity. I have to reject it. If the product is related to the producer in a hostile, inimical manner, the problem is whether you have to reject the product or surrender to the product or conquer the product. Once that is resolved, there is no need for history at all.

The ancients were unconcerned about the history precisely because it was a social problem that they were concerned about. Gandhi was correct. The approaches, the lack of understanding of history, lack of appreciation of history has nothing to do with whether our people were rational or not. Our people are not irrational they are highly rational, highly analytical. But as you suggested, we have to reject that historicism.

Rajiv: The question that our Puranas have been facing is *Neethi ki sekdhi hogi.* That is a central question in all our *Dharamshastra. Neethi ki sekdhi hogi.* Not through *itihaas*, but through *bhakti.* And therefore, Mahabharat being a historical text, its main ethos and purpose is to inspire *Bhakti.* .

Ashis: I think that the meaning of *itihaas* in pre-modern times was different. Now retrospectively, *itihaas* has come to mean history.

In contemporary times the relevant question would be, is the historian moral? Good history is by definition outside morality. History doesn't wait for anybody, neither the historian nor you nor me nor the country or nation but a good historian can take a moral position. Before the emergence of history in this particular form you could still ask the question: is the history moral. I doubt whether that question can really be asked about history today: whether the knowledge is moral. And that is because what we have not discussed what Vinay has hinted at, namely, that traditionally there were other modes of construing the past.

It is not that people did not live with the past, but they constructed the past differently. And each of these modes, myths, legends, epics, Puranas, grandparents' stories, public memory, inherited rumours, each of these had a built-in component of morality. In fact it was sought to be made moral, by building into it the principle of forgetting.

But today, neither history nor any contemporary knowledge system can have such a principle by definition. You can have a principle of remembrance but you cannot ask what is the principle of forgetting?. But in alternative modes of constructing the past, you can always ask two questions, what is the principle of remembering and what is the principle of forgetting. In other words, what should be forgotten on grounds of morality?

Claude: The discussions that take place in academic circles try to give people the impression that history is a superior form of discourse but whatever work I had done in history, particularly the history of science and technology showed that much of the history or what paraded as history was actually mythological in the popular sense of the word.

If we take the available histories of science and technology, you will find that most of them are written by people from the West. You will also find very elaborate mythological descriptions of the stream of technology development in them. I call them mythological because they do not mention very critical stages in the development of science and tech-

nology like for example the take over of the zero, gunpowder from China, etc. It is as though right from the Greeks onward down to present time, the West developed science and technology on its own without any inputs from any other civilisation, because the germ of modern science was concealed in the Greek seed and it somehow sort of unfolded and evolved itself. This is a very elaborate myth but it is called the history of science and technology.

Or take a book about the history of ethics and you'll find that the book has only Western discussions on ethics. It has nothing to do with major ethical civilizations like China and India and all the ethical issues being raised in the Bhagvad Gita and so on. Yet it is called a history of ethics, which means that anybody who reads that book in any part of the world would think that here is all the ethics that you need to understand

So, how much of academic knowledge itself is myth, is something that Multiversity should seriously consider taking up because you can at the same time use the exercise to disempower Western knowledge, to bring it down a couple of pegs and ultimately sanctify myth in its own way. Alternately, you can convert all Western history also into myth.

Rajiv: One of the reasons we try to re-excavate our own historical memory is because people must know their surroundings, their village, their community, their forefathers and so on, because if you know then you will love. If you love, you will have patriotism. Gandhiji said that history is necessary because it makes you patriotic. I'm not talking about nationalism, I'm talking about patriotism.

For example, there is no historical literature about Saurashtra. There is some old history which forms part of the memoirs of some British historian which itself is part of the larger history of Rajasthan. But there is nothing which was written by people of Saurashtra which we could call history. However in Gujarati literature we

find that Jabis Chand Meghani, a great poet and literary person from Saurashtra wrote two sets of eight books. One set, called *Saurashtrani Rasdhar*, contains stories of the valour and beauty of Saurashtra. The other is *Sorki Bhar Gutia*. Bhar gutias are the outlaws who took arms against oppressors. Meghani went from village to village recording all this oral history which is the immortal literature of Saurashtra.

In the introduction he writes that he has collected these stories from our people because our young people think that all those great values of valour, bravery, sacrifice, all these belong only to the British people and we don't have anything. Consequently we have a very low idea of ourselves. Therefore he has collected all these stories of valour and sacrifice and bravery because only if our young people know about them then they will realise that their motherland is worth respecting. This is patriotism.

These stories used to be very popular at one time. I would rank this literature as important history of Saurashtra since it is *itihaas* which teaches patriotism and which can bring us out of the Western hegemony of historical knowledge about our own land.

Makarand: Both these interventions are suggestions for counter histories because fundamentally you're putting history to a different use from the colonial or the Western perspective.

If you look at the history of ethics, history of philosophy, history of science, they are all Western histories, obviously constructed very selectively. But it is precisely through such selectivity that the notion of the West as a continuous entity was constructed in the first place. However we are in a multiuniverse with different patterns of communication and exchange of ideas and cultural flows and what we therefore need is to show these patterns and thereby the notion of a continuous West which exported itself and exploited others, can be undermined.

The other point about myth and history is also very interesting. If Western histories are myths, then are we also saying as an inversion that our myths are histories? The

question then is are we going to be content with just that or are we going to take Vinay's point further and say, let's be anti-historical. Or do we say lets re-mythologize ourselves?

I would simply say is that we need both. You need histories, you need myths. You can't just say they're doing this, let's turn it around, let's invert it. No, I think you need different sorts of histories. The historical imagination once it has been incorporated can't just be banished. What we need to really focus on are the uses of history, the abuses of history and the multiplicity of perspectives which include histories and myths and other ways of self definition, ways of forgetting and ways of remembering.

Chimni: I have a question for Vinay. Can you expand on this understanding of anti historicism, and what kind of a resolution could be offered to a problem like Ayodhya? Secondly, how do you arbitrate between different ways of forgetting and different ways of remembering the past, from an anti-historicist sort of model which you just expounded or which you suggested that Gandhi expounded.

Vinay: When you talk about resolution, needless to say I don't have a blue print. But the first thing is to think about the facts. So if you had to think about the historical fact that the Babri Masjid stood there for a very long period of time, why is it that at this particular juncture in history, some group of people start finding a problem with this place and decide that they're going to characterise it in a certain way. Now this is where it seems to me that the argument about forgetfulness becomes important. I mean there are ways in which civilizations tacitly agree that there are some things that are not important enough to think about or that it is better not to think about them.

Shilpa: I just want to add a comment regarding how Multiversity should approach history. Given all the conversations that I've just been listening to very carefully, I believe we should recognise and articulate that history, or the current project of history, is necessarily a kind of manipulation. This means looking at any project that tries to collect somebody's past, as a project of manipulation. I think this view gets you out of the 'good' manipulation or 'bad' manipulation argument. It's first a question of manipulation.

So, can we recognise the lenses by which we're manipulating or being manipulated? Whether the lenses used are meant to support a project of the nation-state or to support a feeling of patriotism, that doesn't really matter. That will involve asking, who is manipulating this time and why? People should first understand that the starting point of any work on historical processes is manipulation. The lenses you are looking through are manipulated lenses.

Vinay: But I'm afraid that's not how people write. People don't make their assumptions clear at the outset – that's the whole enterprise of hermeneutics and interpretation, to figure out the different ways of reading texts. If assumptions were clear, there would be no task left for interpretation.

Shilpa: To say, 'This is the assumption or assumptions that we're working with,' is very much a part of any process of recalling anti-historicism. For example, if I'm going to collect stories, then I should say, 'This is a collection of stories that I have chosen to suit my interests and beliefs. This is not the definitive works of all the people of, say Mewar, or Saurashtra.' I think this approach would be very different from what's normally done in the name of history – which is to say, 'This history is applicable for everyone.' It is again tied to the project of building a nation-state, or building a market in some cases, or building a kind of cohesive group. But what the dominant form of history does in the process, of course, is to eliminate other opportunities or spaces for recreating history, or contesting that version of history and viewing it from other angles.

So our approach in the Multiversity must be different. We might say that whoever is participating in any effort related to history will constantly engage with questioning others' existing assumptions, as well as putting their own assumptions out there for everyone to see. I think that is one way to make work done in Multiversity different from history as it is done today, which tends to make us forget that what is in front of us is interpreted, biased, and manipulated.

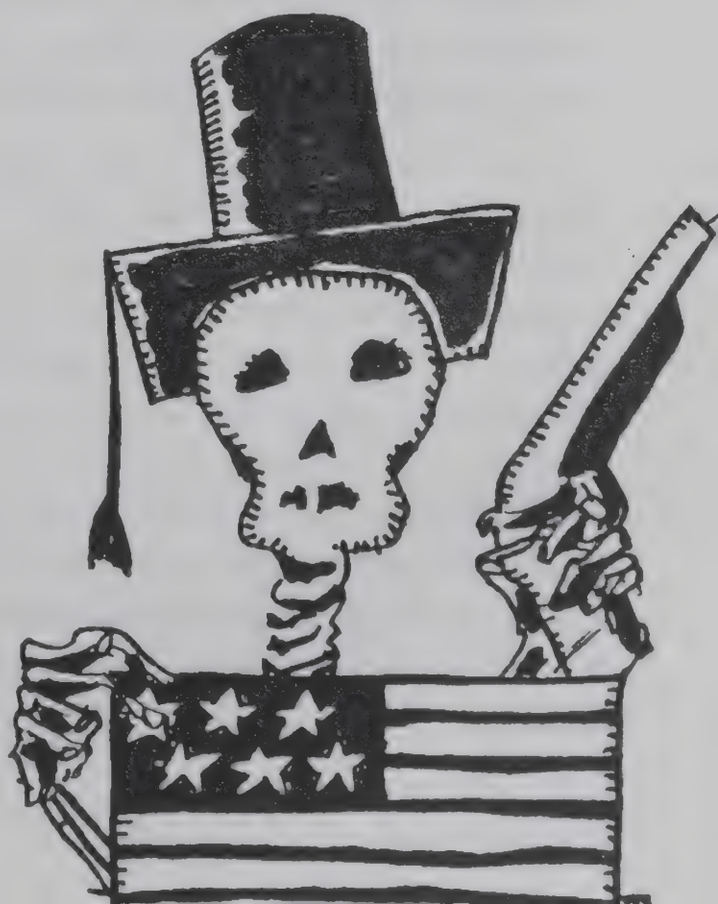
LAW

Bhupinder Chimni

I am going to report on how Western domination has extended itself through the field of law, in particular, international law. I will divide my presentation into four parts.

First, I will speak on why we need to take international law seriously. Second, I will talk about the modes through which Western domination extends or is embedded in the world of international law. Third, I'll touch upon the kind of steps that some of us in the third world international law community have undertaken in order to contest this Western domination, and fourth, I will end with some suggestions on how we could proceed further.

Let me begin by talking about why we need to take international law seriously. I think that international law is increasingly literally displacing national law. What we are witnessing is a process similar to that which took place in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the unification of the European states took place, and there was an attempt to have a single legal system within the nation-state by overcoming local boundaries, local laws, local customs and so on. At that



We were always told in law school that the highest judiciary in our country is the Supreme Court of India and that whatever it had to say about the laws within our country was the final view on the subject. After the Doha Round is through, all national legislation, including the core areas, will be subject to the arbitration of the World Trade Organisation. That means that if any state contests whether the national legislation is in conformity with international obligations or not, it is not for your own highest judiciary to say whether it's in conformity or not, but for a third party, sitting in Geneva, to suggest whether you are fulfilling your international obligations or not.

time it was done in order to aid the functioning of national capital.

Now what we're seeing is a process through which laws are being universalised within the world itself in order to have a single space for the operation of what I would call transnational capital. The result of the process that has been unleashed is mind boggling. The incessant talk of globalisation in the media, in the academia, is not a spontaneous process but is being induced through establishing certain formal legal regimes and institutions that are promoting this particular kind of globalisation process.

One consequence is that it is redefining the essence of democracy in the third world countries. How is this happening? Let me illustrate by taking just one major octopus like organisation which has come into existence only a few years ago and which we are all familiar with: the World Trade Organisation. If the Doha Round, which has been launched two months ago goes through, then at the end of another five of six years, we will see that some of the core aspects of national policy or national sovereign space, would have been colonised by international law. Whether you take the area of investment, or technology policy, or services, or environment,

or labour standards or government procurement, or competition policy, in all these areas, at the conclusion of the Doha Round, India like most other third world countries would have to acquiesce to outcome of the Doha Round.

What does this mean in terms of the practice of democracy? It means that the heart of the Indian democratic process, the electoral process, really means nothing. Because whether you elect the Communist party of India (Marxist), or whether you elect the Bharatiya Janata Party, or whether you elect the Congress party, anybody you elect to the government would have to abide by the same economic policies, because India has undertaken an international obligation to that effect, and this international obligation is backed up by unbelievable power of the sanctions of the dominant states. So for an ordinary person who has voted, in the belief that he would be able to modify the economic policies that different political parties pursue, this is no longer going to be possible.

Let me give you another illustration of how these institutions transcend or subvert our own democratic institutions. We were always told in law school that the highest judiciary in our country is the Supreme Court of India and that whatever it had to say about the laws within our country was the final view on the subject. After the Doha Round is through, all national legislation, including the core areas, will be subject to the arbitration of the World Trade Organisation. That means that if any state contests whether the national legislation is in conformity with international obligations or not, it is not for your own highest judiciary to say whether it's in conformity or not, but for a third party, sitting in Geneva, to suggest whether you are fulfilling your international obligations or not. I think these are very radical develop-

I mentioned earlier this division into law of peace and law of war. If you go through the substance of the courses, you will find that the so called 'law of peace' was the one predominantly used to colonise the third world. But even that nomenclature has not been questioned by the third world law institutions. It continues to be taught as it has been handed down to us.

ments that have taken place. In international economic law these are simply called developments.

When I was a student at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, we had just two courses on international law: one was called the law of peace and one was called the law of war. At present we have ten fully established branches of international law: environmental law, trade law, air law, space law, human rights law, intellectual property rights law and all the rules of these branches of law are essentially rules which have been dictated to the third world by the West. So you can see the spatial expansion that international legal rules, dominated by the West, have undergone. And the increasing web of rules, established in the last two decades alone, is strangulating the third world. Right now, I think it doesn't even possess breathing space.

The more mundane issue is how these Western rules and legal structures are legitimised in the third world, in the law schools, through the education process. The situation here is of course no different from how it is in other disciplines. At a conference of international law teachers in Asia, we surveyed the text books that are used to teach law to students in different parts of Asia, and we found that practically all institutions use either British or American text books.

Then, of course, there is the colonial structure of the courses that is never even questioned. For example, I mentioned earlier this division into law of peace and law of war. If you go through the substance of the courses, you will find that the so called 'law of peace' was the one predominantly used to colonise the third world. But even that nomenclature has not been questioned by the third world law institutions. It continues to be taught as it has been handed down to us.

In journals, the situation is almost desperate. Out of say a hundred journals, ninety are produced in the United States alone, another nine in Europe and probably one percent of the global journals are produced in the third world and the distribution of even that one percent leaves much to be desired.

Then there is the huge growing Internet divide, where the complete flow of information is North-South. There is a mass of information out there that students access, but the flow is

essentially from the North to the South, and it requires a great amount of discretion to use the materials to our advantage.

There are two other developments currently taking place in India, which I think have happened in South East Asia much earlier. One is the phenomenon that I call the imported law school, most ably represented in the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. The National Law School openly says that it is producing lawyers for the corporate world. That's part of or almost, its mandate, its charter. It takes pride in the fact that the first nine students who top each batch are now hired by the corporate sector. Much of the visiting faculty is funded by the Ford Foundation and other American foundations. And the tragedy is that the National Law School is so successful, that another half a dozen law schools all over India are trying to replicate that mode:

The other is the globalising law firm. With the opening up of trade and services, slowly the international law firms are starting to arrive. Of course there is resistance within India from the legal community that won't allow them to practise here. But there are offshore corporations and they disguise themselves in other forms, so the global law firm is arriving, which changes the legal practices. I'm not so concerned about the fact that they are going to deprive our lawyers of money, but the fact is that they are now going to import the complete format of law practise from the West to India.

Now these are some of the ways in which the dominant Western thinking is being implanted in the law schools. And this is deeply troubling, given the fact that law schools today are very much sought after by the bright young people.

What is being done to contest this dominance? Well, some

One needs to invent an alternative model of a law school which does not cater to the corporate world, but which looks at the legal process from a wider social perspective, which talks about alternative modes of dispute resolution, and not simply third party dispute resolution, which is how the West has given it to us and so on.

of the first generation of third world international lawyers did try to contest this dominance by pointing to the fact that our ancient texts the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, show that we practised international law between princely kingdoms and therefore, this practise needs to be taken into account. Some critiqued international law for its prejudices, bias, colonial exploitation and so on. But they did not go beyond that to examine the deeper structures which were embedded in international law. In other words, they thought that once this international law, was purged of its substantive biases, they could use the form of international law as we inherited it, to the advantage of the third world countries. This did not happen.

Now, more recently there's another group of young scholars, who call themselves TWAIL i.e. Third World Association of International Lawyers or Third World Approaches to International Law. This group assembled sometime in 1995, and we've had a number of meetings since then, the whole idea being to contest both, the history of international law as it is being articulated by the West, as well some of the contemporary legal regimes. Among the concrete measures that have been taken is launching a journal called the *Third World and International Law*, the first journal of its kind.

There is also another organisation based in Singapore, called the Foundation for the Development of International Law in Asia, which is not so much interested in contesting the Western structures, but produces a journal called the *Asian Yearbook of International Law*, which is read in the West. So, some of us are trying to substantively restructure the Yearbook, so that we can carry out this project of contesting Western dominance.

Finally, what can Multiversity do? There are several ways of looking at this. At a very practical level, there's a need for having a text book that is written in the third world, in the interest of third world peoples. One can also bring out pamphlets critiquing contemporary international legal regimes and put up extended bibliographies on the website for those who are interested in this project. One needs to invent an alternative model of a law school which does not cater to the corporate world, but which looks at the legal process from a

wider social perspective, which talks about alternative modes of dispute resolution, and not simply third party dispute resolution, which is how the West has given it to us and so on. Redefining curricula, having alternative syllabi for different course work, could be other projects.

I think that if we take some of these practical steps, we should be able to at least make the presence of the third world perspective present for those who desire to access it. Not everybody would want to access it but part of the problem today is that even for somebody who is interested in something like this, it is not very easy to access the source material.

Of course, the final thing we have been trying to do as part of the TWAIL activities is to talk about how to do international law differently. Most of the international law which is written today is written within the positivist paradigm – it's all about interpreting legal rules, the wider social context is never considered. What we are trying to do, is to make sure the narrative of resistance to some of the contemporary legal regimes is made central to the discourse of international law.

For example, in all the treatises and articles written about the international regime of the oceans there is not a single writing about the consequences of the law of the sea for the ordinary fisher folk in India. We know that the licensing regime emerged because of the Law of the Sea convention and this licensing regime has resulted in all kinds of problems for the fisher folk in different parts of India and elsewhere. Yet, there's not a single line in the legal treatises about this. Likewise, there's not a sentence in intellectual property rights law about what it means for ordinary people. Or how the agreement on agriculture transforms the agricultural practices of different countries.

So, one way to overcome this one-sided education is to invent another form of doing international law, so

that the problems and the resistance which it offers to the present legal regimes becomes an integral part of this discourse.

Mohideen Kader

My presentation deals with national law. I will use Malaysia as an example because that's the only place I know. I will first trace historically how English law became dominant in Malaysia, marginalizing the local law in the process to such an extent that certain potentials that were there in local law could not be developed because of colonialism. Then I'll briefly look at the situation prevalent today and finally discuss a few things that Multiversity can do to improve matters.

One of the strategies of colonialism has been to either wipe out or create an amnesia in us about our own traditions and culture (which also includes law), as if we never had justice in our own societies, or institutions to provide for justice.

Take the case of Malacca, in Malaysia. In the sixteenth century, Malacca was one of the most important trading ports in the world where people from China, India, and many other countries had settled in order to do business. It was a port city with numerous ships coming in and it would certainly have needed laws and regulations to govern all this business. Alfonso Albuquerque himself noticed that when the Portuguese conquered Malacca there was a system of law and a system of administration of justice in existence.

In fact, two of the laws were actually codified. One, called the *unda unda Malacca* dealt with crimes and other commercial matters. The other called *unda unda ulacca* dealt with maritime law. The customary law of Malaysia had two branches – the *adat pathe* which was influenced by the matriarchal system, and the *adat tamangovi* which was based on the patriarchal system.

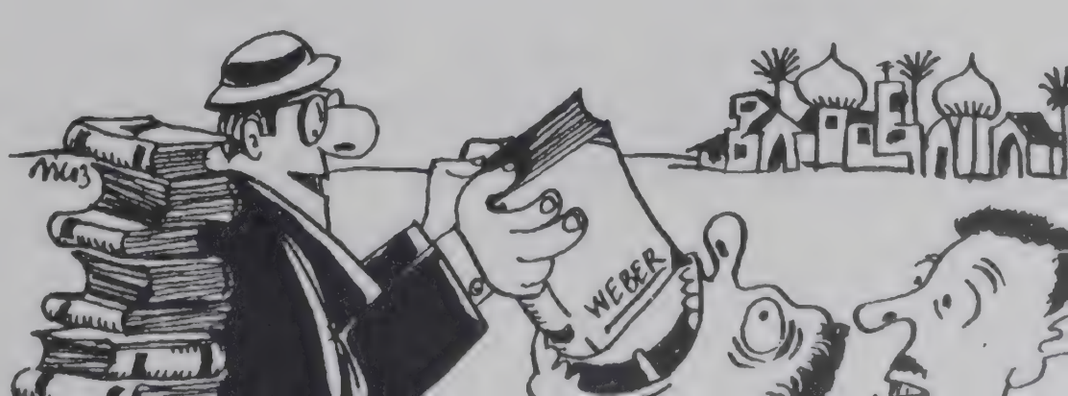
Malaysian law was influenced by both Hindu law, and Islamic law. Hindu influence is seen especially in criminal matters. Islamic law had a dominant role since the thirteenth century and whatever laws were inconsistent or contrary to the teachings of Islam were gradually set aside and replaced by Islamic law.

So, one can see that when the Portuguese came to Malacca there was already a fairly well developed system of law in place.

After the Portuguese came the Dutch and after the Dutch came the British. During the period the Portuguese and Dutch were ruling Malacca, they did not interfere with the local administration of law. It is the British, who actually introduced measures which marginalised the local law and made English law the dominant law and a legal system based on the English legal system, the dominant system in this country. It shows the genius of the British in recognising how best to control people – through law.

It began with Penang in the early nineteenth century. There were two charters: the first charter of justice was introduced in 1807, and the second charter of justice in 1826. Both these laws provided the legal basis for the adoption or imposition of English law into Penang. These charters of justice did state that one should take into consideration local customs, traditions etc. But in substance, local law was not taken into consideration in most cases, because the people who administered the justice were people who did not know anything about the law, customs or beliefs of the people living in these Straits Settlements. There were also the decisions of the judges who administered the law, which eventually became part of the law, and these decisions were based on English precedents.

As far as the other states which formed Malaysia like Perak, Johor, and so on were concerned, the English appointed British advisors and British residents who were supposed to merely advise the sultans of the different states. But in fact the sultans had no choice but to accept the advice given by these British advisors. In effect, all power went into the hands of the advisor, except, perhaps with respect to Islam, it being the religion of the Malays. Everything else, relating to land, resources, trade, all became vested in the British advisor, and the sultan



had no power except to follow the orders. In this way, the British actually introduced the Criminal Procedure Code from India into these states. Finally in the year 1937, they introduced the Civil Law Enactment, a statute that actually enabled the introduction of English law into the Malay states.

In 1956, the Federation of Malaya of the Straits Settlements and the Malay states was formed and English law became the dominant law of this country. This has continued even after independence. So, not only did the British introduce English law, not only did they have British judges to dispense justice at that time, what is more subversive and more dangerous was that they also created a legal elite, who had no knowledge whatsoever of our own history, of our own laws. Their only understanding of law was the law that came from Britain. Thus, even lawyers trained in Malaysia thought we never had any law in this country and that justice could only come through the white man.

I did my law course in England. As part of the course on legal history. I knew all about the Norman Conquest, the Magna Carta and how equity developed. But I didn't know anything about the Shariat, or the Hindu law that applied in Malaysia. You may say that is because I studied law in England, but what about those who studied law in Malaysia? The same law course was taught here for many years. Only a few decades ago, when there was this whole Islamisation move, and people began to look at their history in a different way, that a course on Malaysian Legal History was introduced in the curriculum.

In traditional societies, there were religious constraints, moral constraints, social constraints. You didn't need laws to regulate human behaviour. But now, with modernised society, even many progressive civil society organisations begin to believe that only laws can give justice and equity to people. I think we have enough experience to recognise that even as there are a lot of laws, justice is receding further and further from the majority of the population.

So, because the colonial rulers created an elite that had no understanding of its own traditions, law or customs, we have not been able to introduce even into the civil law, concepts which could have been accepted by English law, concepts derived from our own traditions. Take for example the concept of equity which existed in Islamic law as far back as in the sixth century. Places like Grenada had even developed concepts like the consideration of public interest when deciding a case. In England the system of equity developed as late as the fifteenth or sixteenth century in response to the rigours of common law. Now if this concept had been allowed to develop in our common law, it would have become part of the Malaysian legal system.

That's a brief history of how our own law became marginalised and colonial law became dominant until this day. Law does not develop in a vacuum. It develops in response to changes in society. Perhaps if our law had been allowed to continue without the intrusion of colonialism, Malaysia today would have developed its own system of law which may have been different from what we have now. But the fact is that because of the colonial intrusion, an opportunity for all legal concepts to develop has been scuttled.

Unfortunately, the leadership of post colonial Malaysia too, because of their education or because of the value systems prevalent today, also do not appreciate the vast richness of our local law and the fact that it could be applied to our society even today. We continue to mimic instead. This, I think has been a great loss in terms of trying to create our own identity in the field of legal justice.

Another point I wish to raise is the proliferation of laws. There's a feeling now that you create a law and you can solve the problem. In traditional societies, there were religious constraints, moral constraints, social constraints. You didn't need laws to regulate human behaviour. But now, with modernised society, even many progressive civil society organisations begin to believe that only laws can give justice and equity to people. I think we have enough experience to recognise that even as there are a lot of laws, justice is receding further and further from the majority of the population.

So, this requires a radical rethinking about the role of law in society, and the values embedded in religious teaching, culture or tradition. Sometimes one could argue that the less laws we have, the better. Each community should regulate its own behaviour, and there should be as few laws as possible – that is one thing that we in Multiversity could think about.

Another area we should focus on is the mystification of law: very often, even lawyers cannot understand the way law is written, much less the way law is interpreted. So what is the fate of the ordinary person? We are making it more and more difficult for people to understand the whole legal process. They come to court, they see this very strange set up, with the judge wearing strange clothes (they used to even wear wigs till recently) and the lawyers with gowns. Imagine a man coming from a fishing village, going to the courts seeking justice. He gets totally intimidated and alienated. After independence, we have just continued the same traditions of mystification not only of the law, but also the whole process of coming to justice.

Finally, because of economic disparity in society, there is no access to law for the majority of the population. The Consumers' Association of Penang, for example, has called for the creation of more tribunals, where lawyers are not allowed, procedure is simplified and one doesn't need much money, in order to create easy access to law for the ordinary citizen.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that just as we are talking about history or education, when talking about law, we cannot ignore the fact that it is closely linked to the socioeconomic structure of society. What power does the ordinary fisherman have to influence the laws that are made in parliament? On the other hand five businessmen could get a law enacted tomorrow if they want. So we have to realise that we are operating in a situation in which there is great disparity of power, wealth and influence, and that a lot of things are driven by what business thinks is important for it. So in this context, how do we bring about a transformation of the law making process so that there will be justice and equity in society? It's not an easy problem to solve at all.

Discussion

Claude: How does Multiversity intervene in a process like this? Because compared to other academic disciplines in universities, law deals with the state, with judges, with bodies of judgements, which are already frozen in time in a certain sense. Chimni has talked about alternative law schools. What would an alternative law school do? What would its syllabus be? Because it would still have to teach criminal law, civil law and so on. The National Law Schools are doing it with style and with flair, and they've created a culture so that the brightest people go there and they get snapped up. But in what way would the syllabus be different in an alternative institution?

Chimni: Even within the current model of law schools, there are possibilities available, in terms of even moral education as we understand it. Just before I came, I bought a little book from Navjivan Trust, Gandhiji's writings on *Law and Lawyers*, and I found some very interesting points in it. Apparently, Gandhi would tell his clients on the very first day, that if at any point of time he found that the client was dishonest with him, he would walk out of the case. And he was known to simply abandon the case if he did find that his client had misled him. Whenever he spoke to the legal community he would say that the matter of money should be extremely secondary to obtaining justice for the individual. So even within the current model – remember, Gandhiji was part of the current model, he practised law for twenty years – he found a way out. In South Africa, when he appeared in a case, the judges knew that there could be nothing wrong with the version presented and they were willing to hear him and abide by him. He had created that space for himself.

So, what you are looking for is not necessarily a really

dramatic overhaul of the system. Even within the current model there are enormous possibilities of injecting it with ethical content, of re-interpreting the law in ways which connect with the lives of ordinary people, in trying to inject into the legal community the idea that they should take up the cause of ordinary citizens.

Rajiv: There is no doubt that Gandhiji wanted to inject truth, and take out untruth, but he could not take away the authority of the court and the law. What are we grappling with is something different. The authority of the English law, the foreign law as you described it remains the same. It is basically monopolising our entire life. The West has been trying to monopolise both our capacity to fight and our capacity to live, and thus gains total control over life and death. You can see that right from the establishment of the Permanent Settlement Act in India uptil now, including WTO etc, the intention is to establish complete monopoly over food, land, forests, everything which makes us live, so as to totally control life. They did the same thing through the United Nations, by retaining total control over armaments while disarming others. They are playing God.

The answer doesn't lie in Multiversity, not at all. The answer lies in reestablishing for example the validity of the Shariat law, because this is a civilisational war. Islam is a civilization, it has been reduced to just playing religion today. The Islamic population, is left with some rituals and traditions to provide some private consolation to the soul. But running the state, running the lives of the people? That is denied, even though Islam is coextensive with the entire life of the people. Equity is very much present in Islam. The Islamic law against earning interest for example is just and makes for good economics for the community. But it cuts at the very root of modern economics. If you remove interest from money lending, then the entire system collapses.

So the answer doesn't lie in any modern alternative. In Islamic countries, the answer to everything, whether it is education or law, is how can one re-infuse, or empower the Shariat law. If it is unjust, how can you reform it. But if Muslims go away from their own ethos, their intellect and their morality, and define spirituality as merely religious

practice, where one reads the scriptures as a private consolation to one's soul, what happens to Islamic civilization? If your economic order is taken out from your civilization, your state structure is taken out, your education, your culture and intellect are similarly removed, the very way you visualize the world and your ideas of progress are redefined, then your law too gets redefined. After all, the purpose of law is essentially to protect all your ideas and your institutions.

Therefore I don't think that Multiversity can resolve these issues. We can raise these issues, but finally these issues have to be solved at completely different levels. In Malaysia we must speak to our Islamic friends, Islamic scholars, and Islamic organisations. If they are not confident, empower them. Empowering them is empowering people.

Jessica: I thought to share some of the things that are happening in Aotearoa regarding Maori and law. Somebody asked me how is it that the Maori in a colonised nation managed to successfully fight for the right to participate in environmental issues, health issues, social services and so on. About 20–30 years ago, when the Maori started to challenge the Crown through the legal system, they ended up taking the Crown to Court over different pieces of legislation and over breaches to the Treaty of Waitingi. The cases were fought not only in the courts in New Zealand, but in the UK and some of the matters went up to the Privy Council as well. I think that it was that move that started to turn around for the Maori some of the colonising legislation that had been in place and allowed the Maori to have more voice in the colonial system operating in their lands.

Maori people while becoming aware of and analysing the law and the impact that it is having on the Maori, also began questioning whether that one should talk about law, as in the white man's l-a-w, or about law as in l-o-r-e, indigenous lore. And many Maori felt we should talk about lore and not law. Maori have a lore of cosmology, and our own indigenous knowledge. So although we've gone to the courts to argue for resources, we are also arguing for rights under Maori lore.

Of course we now have in Aotearoa, a whole lot of predominantly white lawyers, who are making so much money on the back of Maori grievances against the Crown. Presently

we are in a big treaty settlement process in Aotearoa. The tribe that I come from has been compensated 160 million dollars in cash and 180 million dollars over 25 years in assets. It is a double edged sword really. In some respects it has given freedom in terms of financial resources to Maori, and in other respects, it is a continuation of colonisation.

We now have big multinational law firms coming to train our white law graduates to represent the Maori, and the Maori are buying these services because they are good lawyers. Eventually over ten to fifteen years the case is heard and settled. In the meantime those big multinational corporations have built relationships with those tribes and now they are moving in to work with those tribes, making investments, looking at other services, investing the money that the tribes fought so hard to get. So there's a negative aspect also to the Maori participation in the legal process in Aotearoa.

Yusef: It's a similar situation among native Americans also. They started to study colonial law and found that the law that the US government uses to administer native Americans is basically a variation of the law of conquest and it dates all the way back to the Crusades. They also found that the law that is used to administer their lands is basically a nonsensical hotch potch of contradictory legislations that no one has bothered to take the time to look at. And soon they were in the same situation as Jessica has explained, where they began to bring in the indigenous American lore.

For example, a couple of tribes started to bring in things like weavings and blankets that had the lore of the land woven into them, and they began to force the judges to look at them. The lawyers came in with their stacks of paper, and the tribal elders came with their blankets, their wampum belts and strings of beads. They pointed to one of their elders who could explain the story of the two blue lines on this wampum belt which he learned from his grandfather, who learned it from his grandfather and so on. So they forced the court to accept that the native Americans did have a law or a lore and if the government was not willing to let the native Americans proceed from their lore, but were forcing them to adhere to the ragged hotch potch of law imposed on them then clearly it continues to be a colonial operation.

So the legal system is a double-edged sword in many ways, but I think that's the wedge to force into it, i.e if you're going to bring such cases to court, don't play by the white lawyers game – you might get some money out of it, but you're also lining their pockets rather well. If you can get this other aspect in and bring in the indigenous idea of what is land ownership, that's where the colonial system starts to fall apart.

Vinay: What is common to both the prepared remarks that we have had on law is that they are obviously talking about the relationship between law and colonialism, law and neo-colonialism and therefore the first point that I want to make is on this aspect. It seems to me that there were two fundamental transformations that were effected by colonialism. One, the jurisdictional concept that was absolutely critical for the establishment of colonial law was the idea of *terra nullis*. *Terra nullis* means that all these lands that were encountered by the coloniser were empty lands, literally empty. This became a jurisdictional concept in the sixteenth century in Europe and even though legally it has been revoked, in fact it exists right to the present day. When governments speak about places as not being sufficiently developed or underdeveloped, this in fact is a variation of the idea that these are wastelands or empty lands that have to be filled, impregnated, by Europe.

Two, the real transformation in the colonising process came around in the eighteenth century when the idea of custom was replaced by law. Henry Sumner Maine who worked extensively on colonial law in the nineteenth century, pointed out that there was a very significant transformation that took place in Indian society, which was a change from status to contract, which is another way of saying there was a shift from custom to law.

Now, this is precisely one of our burdens – that the law has always been seen by a vast majority of people, as something that comes from the top. And in that sense there has to a fundamental way of rethinking the place of law. As an aside, I might add, that this idea of the law as foreign or as coming from the top is echoed in the vast bulk of popular Hindi films where the police always arrive late on the scene.

Secondly, I have a question for Chimni: do you think that there is any scope for inventiveness in international law, that might make it somewhat more ecumenical? As you have rightly described it, international law is entirely dominated by the West and by elites elsewhere in the south who obviously agree with that frame of reference.

Finally, regarding Claude's very specific question on what can Multiversity do about this situation, take this very small but significant example: The idea that there are certain classes of people who are criminal tribes and castes is something that goes back to the colonial state, and in fact was actually codified in law in the 1870s. Subsequently some of these criminal castes and tribes were denotified by the government of India. The interesting thing is that even in most administrative offices of the Indian government and state governments, they still don't know about the denotification. So there are actually about a 110 million people who are condemned by the law itself. So, while we think about law, international or otherwise, I would also urge that we reflect on Gandhi's insight, namely that the fundamental transformations do not occur under the auspices of law.

Chimni: First, about the modernity issue. I was very interested in seeing how somebody different, not a professional in international relations or law scholar, writes about these issues. I found about three or four dozen pieces by Sri Aurobindo on the League of Nations, the United Nations etc. fascinating writings on the subject. In other words, what I'm suggesting is that in the plane of international relations and law, the form of critique is often dictated by the nature of the subject, and how to do it imaginatively is something that needs to be thought about.

I agree about the legal system being a double edged sword. One of the things that we, first generation of third world international lawyers, once thought was that the more international law that we had the better the situation would be, but now we have international law which covers every aspect of international life, domestic life, and things are worse. The question is, would the absence of these laws, the absence of the liberal discourse, would it for example have left the Maori people better off, in the same situation?

I think laws themselves can be devised in a way that keeps the white lawyers out, i.e. alternative modes of dispute resolution which are part of our traditions, could be moulded into the liberal discourse. So I wouldn't say we go in for complete rejection, but I think there are possibilities of using that language to our advantage which also applies to the larger issue of whether we are anti-West in some way, or not.

SCIENCE

Sailen Ghosh

I have been asked to suggest how Multiversity should function in the realm of science and technology. Broadly speaking, I would like Multiversity to be the catalytic agent for reorientation of the attitudes of science researchers in the universities and technology institutes of the entire tropical world and also give a push to the vigorous pursuit of people's science and people's technology in local areas. I shall now try to give some concrete suggestions about these two aspects.

First, I would like the Multiversity to be the agent to disabuse the scientific community's mind of certain wrong ideas. Today you find that the scientific community's propensity to manage nature runs far ahead of their interest in knowing Nature's ways. Instead of trying to understand the secrets of nature's bounteousness, they try to squeeze more out of her by force, without pausing to see that this is leading to disastrous results. However if we know how to work in harmony with nature, we could get much more than by trying to apply energetic force on her.

Secondly, I would like the Multiversity to spread the message that most of the world's speciation centres (i.e. centres where new species of crops originated) were in the tropical countries – in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. So, if we disrupt the nature-given system, we would be the greater losers. Nobody knows what new species of crops the undisturbed or the least disturbed ecosystems could throw up here. The recognition of natural speciation centres is extremely important. Scientists, who try to play God and create new species of crops or animals but who do not have the power to ordain the co-evolution of even the existing species,

should take note that their disruptive effects might spoil our chances of getting more beneficial species as natural gifts.

Thirdly, I would like the Multiversity to use all media – internet, TV, film, print media etc. – to propagate the message that though we are all inhabitants of one Spaceship Earth, ecosystemically, there is a great divide between the tropical countries and the so-called temperate regions. (Because the latter have a chilly climate most of the time, it is better to call them mid-latitude countries instead of temperate countries).

There is colossal ignorance even among the scientific and technological community about differences that exist between tropical and mid-latitude regions. The soil patterns are different, the rainfall patterns are different, the wind patterns are different the pollination patterns are different; nature's manner of storing nutrients in these two sets of countries is also very different. In tropical countries, the nutrient storage is in the trees, in the mid-latitude countries the main nutrients are in the soils. So, here in the tropics, if you fell the trees, then, all the nutrients go waste.

There is yet another difference between these two sets of countries which is the extent of biodiversity. Nature has found stability in the tropics in a much larger chain of interconnectedness. In the tropics there is a much larger diversity of plants, animals, and microorganisms. Hence, if we blindly follow the practices of mid-latitude countries we will destroy this bio-diversity, and we are all finished. Therefore, I would suggest that Multiversity should carry the message that the tropical world should be the agent for maintaining and enhancing the huge diversity of plants and animals.

The West has been the leader in the domain of reductionist science and machine-oriented technology during the last two centuries. Now, we have to pioneer living-system-oriented science and nature-harmonic technologies. Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose was the pioneer of a new line of botanical research and discovered the unity of life between plants and animals. That finding was in harmony with the Upanishadic message that plants are sentient. We have to make many more discoveries at the fundamental level, particularly in the life sciences. That is our responsibility because of our natural endowments of vast biodiversity. When I plead for living-

system-oriented sciences, I emphasise the need for understanding the lives of plants, apart from studying in depth the properties of each specific plant and animal species, and the various ways of interaction between the various species of plants and animals.

The requirement of living-system-oriented science is much more inclusive than reductionist science and nature-harmonic technology's focus is on understanding nature's ways of working in order to be able to cooperate with nature's ways. The prevailing paradigm of science rests on the theory that outside of quantification, there is no science and that every object of study needs to be reduced to quantitative measurements.

Non-living systems such as machines and even the planetary bodies can be reduced to certain physical parameters such as mass, temperature, pressure, velocity. But living systems interact with too many things and have too many variables. If you want to study a frog in a small pond, it has not only its many interconnecting limbs but also the properties of the water in which it lives, the extent of light penetration in the water, the various smaller life forms of plants and animals that it feeds on and also the bigger life forms against which it has to sharpen its defence mechanism, the process of energy exchange that goes on in the environment etc. There are too many interacting factors involved. Disentangling each factor and quantifying the function of each is exceedingly difficult, bordering on impossibility. When it comes to the study of higher animals and humans, who are mobile in different environments and are engaged in continuous biochemical exchange, subjecting their different aspects to quantification for determination of their functioning is even more difficult.

This is not to deny that even then great strides have been made in biological sciences by the application of reductionist science methods. There has been tremendous advance in the study of DNA molecular biology and in understanding many properties of living organisms in terms of the structure of molecules. Today we hear a lot about diseases which have their source in genes. But it needs to be pointed out that this has not only led to disregard of ecological systems but it is also highly ecodestructive.

Preoccupation with quantification has banished quality from every aspect of life. It has banished morality not only from science but from the society which places a high value on a given pattern of science and technology. Now, the scientists themselves are finding that there are many aspects of life that cannot be explained by reductionist science. Even gene therapy which raised high hopes is likely to prove illusive in producing healthy bodies. This paradigm of science is giving false starts and is leading towards the pursuit of demonic science whose inevitable result is the tearing apart of life-support systems and disruption of the natural genetic structures of crops, microorganisms, and animals including humans. This kind of science is threatening life's survival on this planet.

Molecular biologists seek to find the secret of life in molecules, the smallest unit into which a substance is divided without losing its chemical substance, usually consisting of an atom or two. I would like to quote the venerable scientist, Albert Szent-Gyorgi, who gave a telling expose of the molecular biologists' efforts at discovering the secret of life in the molecules and the limitations of reductionist science. He also explained why the study of inanimate subjects is different from the study of animate subjects.

I quote him: 'Inanimate nature stops at the low level of organization of simple molecules. But living systems go further and combine molecules to form macromolecules, macromolecules to form organelles (such as nuclei, mitochondria, chloroplasts, ribosomes, or membranes), and eventually put all these together to form the greatest wonder of creation, a cell with its astounding inner regulations. Then it goes on putting cells together to form higher organisms and increasingly more complex individuals..At every step, new, more complex, and subtle qualities are created. In the end we are faced with properties which have no parallel in the animate world, although the basic rules remain unchanged.'

Further, he said 'those who like to express themselves in the language of mathematics do well to keep (their study) to lower levels (of life's organization). Any level of organization is fascinating and offers new vistas and horizons but we must not lose our bearings lest we fall victim to the simple idea

that any level of (life's) organization can best be understood by pulling it to pieces, by a study of its components, that is, the study of the next lower level. This many make us dive to lower and lower levels in the hope of finding the secret of life there. It made my own life a wild goose chase. I started my experimental work with rabbits, but finding rabbits too complex, I shifted to a lower level and studied bacteria. I became a bacteriologist. Soon I found bacteria too complex, and shifted to molecules and became a biochemist. So I have spent my life in the hunt for the secret of life..'.

'For twenty years I studied energy transformations ..and worked on biological oxidation on the nuclear level. These studies netted me a Nobel Prize but left me without a better understanding ..the more I knew, the less I understood, and I feared that I would end my life knowing everything and understanding nothing. Evidently something very basic was missing. I thought that in order to understand I had to go one level lower, to electrons, and I began to dabble in quantum mechanics. So I finished up with electronics. But electronics are just electronics and have no life at all. Evidently on the way I lost my life ...'

'If there was a creator, he could not have been a molecular biologist only. He must have known a great deal of quantum mechanics and mathematics too, and must have been a good geneticist and physiologist. If we want to follow his trail and read in the book of creation, we must be a bit of everything. Even if we limit our work to a single level, we have to keep the whole in mind.'

I would like to draw your attention particularly to the last sentence. Even if you limit your work to a single level, you have to keep the whole in mind. Reductionism has its usefulness but it also has its limitations. The solution lies in combining reductionist science with organismic science. If this is done, the drive will be towards holistic science. The drive towards demonic science will be halted.

While I talk of biosciences, I would like to emphasise the need to disabuse our mind of the attractions of certain aspects of biotechnology. Most of our universities are developing a craze for biotechnology. Bioscience has been hijacked by biotechnology. Bioscience was meant to develop knowledge

about natural products and make these available to meet peoples' needs inexpensively. Biotechnology involves industrial processing in most cases, for commercial benefit. Tissue culture and cloning on limited scale of endangered species are beneficial. These can be grouped under bioscience or even under benign biotechnology. Mass-level insulin production may be considered benign biotechnology though there were several litigations against it.

But biotechnology is now gravitating more and more towards transgenic genetic engineering. This incorporates the idea of taking genes from one species and inserting it into some other quite unrelated species. It seems that a genetically modified rice crop containing Vitamin A is going to be forced on us. To lure us, it is being called golden rice. Many of our scientists have become so credulous that they fall for it. In our countries, if rice does not contain enough vitamin A, we eat rice along with drumstick, which is richest in vitamin A. Why would we need gene from another source, may be animals, to be genetically inserted into our rice? Moreover, how much A vitamin do we need? Do we need it in such profusion, as much as we need cereals? Biotechnology therefore is a very dangerous thing.

I would now like to speak about the university's role in medical technology. The existing universities give utmost emphasis to instruction in allopathy, which they call modern medicine, and to surgery. Indigenous systems of medicine – Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani – suffer neglect or at best, stepmotherly treatment. Tribal medicine does not find any place at all. Even Homeopathy, which originated in the West, is neglected. Despite theoretical acceptance of mind-body interaction, it is neglected in therapy.

The virtual acceptance of disease as malfunctioning of a particular part of the body-machine, the excessive emphasis on limb-wise specialisation, the emphasis on hard technology, overuse of drugs, the practice of extracting from plants only the 'active principles' and leaving out important trace elements as well as associated ingredients which could have wholesome effects on the functioning of the overall bio-system are the flaws of this dominant medical technology. Its approach is towards total elimination of disease-producing

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organisms. Since nature does not favour total elimination of any form of life, this approach often leads to the mutation of pathogens within the patient's body. Thus, in the name of curing a disease, it becomes the source of some graver disease. This is the reason why drug-induced diseases are on the rise. Hence there is a need for our Multiversity to arrange regular discussions on the philosophies of different medicinal systems and giving encouragement to all systems of medicine including tribal medicine.

I would like Multiversity to adopt from the beginning one primary school, one higher secondary school, and one college for undergraduate education. Introducing the culture of organicism will be the easiest if the students are initiated to this culture – i.e. organic farming, organic living, holistic health care – from the primary stage onwards.

In order to be creative the pattern of education should be integrated with life and geared to solving life's problems. It must be a joint endeavour of students, teachers and parents. It is necessary that all teachers visit the homes and fields of people around, at least once a week. The Multiversity's experimental laboratories should be in the university campus as well as in the fields and the laboratory researchers should

be not merely the teachers and the students but the farmers as well. This means that the portals of the Multiversity should always be open to the farmers and artisans.

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Even at the cost of repetition, I say that if our young people can begin their lives this way, they will have greater propensity for testing theories. Their assimilation of the theories that have passed their test of experiments and critical reasoning will also be greater. They will have the urge to find newer and newer data. That will open the door to creativity, both in life sciences and in physical sciences.

Lastly, I would like the Multiversity to do one thing in the cultural domain. Our perspective is to change the lot of the people and to create history – not merely to write history books. The urge to create history comes from cultural inspiration. For every new creation which is beneficial to the people, you have to have a pure heart. Creativity comes only to the prepared mind. It comes from the spirit dwelling within. For that there has to be a cultural climate of harmony, altruism and urge for self realization. If you read the

The unlearning of colonial ideologies as they have been taught to us through colonial education systems is an important exercise for us indigenous peoples to do even as we reclaim our knowledge and our own sciences. The unlearning of colonial teachings with regard to science must not be underestimated. It must be a key function of Multiversity.

Koran, you will find that there is a great emphasis on experiencing the pangs of hunger. Fasting during the Ramzan month was introduced for this reason. In the Upanishads also, there is a similar message 'Enjoy by renouncing.' Only by renouncing, you can enjoy bliss. If Multiversity takes initiative in reinterpreting the scriptures of all major religions, our alumnus will be able to experience a new driving force surging within, to create a new world. Hence I would appeal to you to develop a new attitude to science and technology and at the same time, a new culture for a new creativity.

Jessica Hutchings

First I wish to talk about Maori science. Then about Maori education systems which have come a long way in the last 30 years. Finally I will end by talking about some decolonizing knowledge programs that have been conducted in Aotearoa.

Maori people make up 13% of the population in Aotearoa. The important thing to remember about Maori activism in Aotearoa is that it drives Maori initiatives and Maori developments. In Maori activism the goal that we're all striving towards is 'tino rangatiratanga,' which means self-determination, autonomy and sovereignty.

Maori science is a new field and we had to struggle for three years to get this paper taught at my university. The basis of Maori science is our classification system of nature (or *whakapapa*) which comes through our cosmology. The Latin classification system, the ordering system of naming plants and trees is similar to our system. We have *Papatuanuku*, our earth mother, *Ranginui*, sky father. Both *Papatuanuku* and *Ranginui* have 79 offspring or *Atua* (deities) who have various roles and responsibilities in terms of the natural world. This is the basis for Maori science.

Within the world view of Maori science, life is ordered and holistically bound together by 'mauri' or life force. So we teach students about science in this way. It's really hard for them to unlearn what they've spent years learning at high school. The unlearning of colonial ideologies as they have been taught to us through colonial education systems is an important exercise for us indigenous peoples to do even as we reclaim our knowledge and our own sciences. The unlearning

of colonial teachings with regard to science must not be underestimated. It must be a key function of Multiversity.

We spent some time developing a Maori critique of Western science and one of the questions we asked ourselves was, what has been the impact of reductionist science ever since it came over with colonists hundred and sixty years ago? Firstly, Joseph Banks came to Aotearoa and relabelled all of our flora and fauna that had been perfectly labelled for thousands of years in our own system. This created a completely different way of identifying flora and fauna in our country.

Secondly, it has brought to Aotearoa their ways of doing science. It has been hard for us as indigenous people, to enter into the discourse of critiquing genetic modification because our world view often seems very spiritual to the colonial powers. So our arguments get defined as spiritual and not 'scientific', and this has resulted in our arguments becoming totally marginalized. So for Maori it's about finding ways to enter the scientific discourses and debates while at the same retaining our traditional knowledge, and not making that move to enter into Western arguments that do not understand or even begin to comprehend our worldview. It needs to be accepted therefore that if we choose not to discuss genetic modification in terms of Western science that is because it is neither our worldview nor is it culturally inappropriate and unacceptable for us. Western science is very much tied up in terms of genetic modification with multina-

At the same time the university has been developing, we have a Maori education system underway which is really exciting. We have Maori pre-schools, Maori primary schools, Maori high schools, all taught in the medium of Maori language. Maori education has thus become a way of taking Maori people back to their own communities, linking people with families and allowing Maori to reclaim their identity while at the same time helping to retain some of that knowledge that has been dying out.

tionals and globalization which is a further wave of colonization of indigenous peoples all over the world.

One way in which Multiversity could work with Maori science is to assist in developing resources for this university course. It's been really difficult to find resources to teach a paper on indigenous science. I have decided to use writings predominantly by people of colour, preferably women. But to find writings out there by people of colour, that's hard. There are lots of white people who are writing about indigenous science or indigenous ways of knowing, but to generate a discourse based on resource material by people of colour is really important.

I want to talk a little bit here about Maori education as well. Thirty years ago, Maori studies at universities didn't exist at all. There were cultural studies, so you studied Maori people through anthropology departments which is pretty typical of how it happens around the world. Then we forced the university to open the first Maori studies department which was basically culture based i.e. Maori cultural practices and Maori language (*te reo Maori*).

Now we have a range of subjects that are taught in three universities (*whare wananga*) in Aotearoa. You can do a three year degree in tribal studies which will be based on your tribal area, at your *marae* (tribal meeting place). Or you can also do a three year degree in Maori cultural performing arts, or Maori traditional weaving. In this way you can do Maori business, Maori science, Maori resource management, Maori art and so on. Young Maori students can now go to university and be able to reclaim their culture. Some of these Maori students may be from families where their parents have not spoken Maori at home because it was made illegal in the generation that they grew up in. This has resulted in these Maori children having lost most of their culture and language. So, university becomes a place where they are able to regain, strengthen, feel strong and proud of their identity as Maori. So, university has had some very positive benefits.

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guage. Maori education has thus become a way of taking Maori people back to their own communities, linking people with families and allowing Maori to reclaim their identity while at the same time helping to retain some of that knowledge that has been dying out.

My last point is about the decolonization work that is going on in our country. Like most indigenous peoples we are faced with is having to unlearn a whole lot of propaganda and colonial rhetoric about who we Maori are, and about the impact that the Crown has had upon us. Within Aotearoa, some very committed activists have been running decolonisation programs for the Maori people called *Hui Pumaomao* or decolonization workshops. These workshops are aimed at deprogramming some of the information that Maori have been taught time and time again, about who they are and what happened in our country in terms of history. These workshops have been hugely successful and have run all over the country, for a decade, on very limited funding. I strongly believe that such decolonization workshops on the various disciplines we have discussed could be run at various institutions or in various communities at local levels to help people unlearn some of the destructive things they have been taught. This should be a key project of the Multiversity.

S N Nagarajan

My subject is the evaluation of modern science and the criteria by which it can be evaluated.

Up to 1968 or thereabouts, I was not very much concerned with scientific evaluation. I was a Marxist. We used to discuss scientific temper and scientific attitude, and I thought that scientific temper and scientific attitude was the most important way to understand reality and go on the right path.

But, in 1968, we all got a jolt when the bogus scientist, M.S. Swaminathan's 1.6% lysine was cooked up to 16% and the whole green revolution was accepted based on his work and his claims. When I came to know of this, I went to the Association of Scientific Workers India (ASWI), to get this fraud exposed.

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But none of the top scientists, no one in ASWI, came out with a stricture on this. All of them were cowards. So I found that science has not produced any people with courage, or honesty. And my experience of scientists, made me conclude that the truth that they seek is very different from the truth that people like Jesus, or Buddha or Mahavir or Mohammed sought. Its a craft truth or a crafty truth they seek. Tonnes of this kind of knowledge cannot give you one ounce of wisdom. So this is how I have evaluated science.

I will tell you three sentences in Tamil on scientific temper, which are a thousand years old. I do not think you can improve on them by quoting either from Einstein or Haldane or Henry Poincare.

The three sentences are:

First: *What one sees need not be true, what you hear need not be true. Critically examine it.*

This is the best criticism on shallow empiricism and positivism.

Second: *Whoever he may be, either black or white or red or yellow, if what he tells is true, accept it whether it comes from north or south.*

That means the seeker should be humble enough, he should not be arrogant, that is the mark of wisdom.

Third: *If God were to tell the untruth, we should be bold enough to say that it is an untruth even though you may run the risk that he may open his third eye and burn you.*

That means you should have tremendous courage of conviction and honesty.

All of them have a rider which is that the whole world should be happy, otherwise all these things are meaningless. This is the meaning of scientific temper.

When someone asked Gandhi are you against technology, he simply said even the *charkha* is technology – have I rejected it? It should be under our control, we should not be controlled by it, he said. So he made a clear distinction.

So ultimately this knowledge and expertise, advanced studies, all these things should not be tyrannical or control our life. They should always be subordinate. If food production is under the control of those who grow food, there will be no problem at all. Today American imperialism, international imperialism is trying to control the entire food production. That is the greatest danger. One lakh and sixty thousand varieties of paddy were produced in this country by tribals of Chattisgarh area. How they produced it nobody knows but it was never by hybridization. So what we have today, was produced by illiterate people, and the scientists' contribution has been to destroy it.

I believe that if the agricultural colleges are closed, agriculture will develop. That is because people who do not know ABC of the village or the ABC of agriculture are heads of department of agronomy. People who do not dip their hands in cow dung or soil should never be allowed in agriculture departments. We already know that the chemical farming is very bad. In Tamilnadu, a whole shift to organise farming is taking place. The shift cannot become complete unless political conditions change. So if we can create fortunate conditions then the whole situation will change.

Discussion

Chimni: I'm asking for clarification either from the participants or the speakers themselves. I thought there were two sets of propositions that were being made. The first set is as follows: One, that the products of science and technology are not culturally neutral and should not be universalized; two, that certain products and practices are harmful and therefore should not be adopted; three, that in combination with transnational capitalism, this could lead to the

recolonisation of the already colonized world; and four, that Western science rejects non-Western scientific and technological practices. This was one kind of proposition that I understood as sort of being advanced.

The second set goes further: that unethical practices, violence and the non-cognizance of non Western scientific practices are intrinsic to the scientific endeavour itself, and further, that the very assumptions and rules of science themselves are vitiated. Therefore the very idea of doing science itself is problematic and its products in terms of technology even more.

So the clarification I want is, which of these two positions are being advanced, or are both being advanced?

Rajiv: The religions suppressed truth, did not allow reason in many areas and decadence started. Therefore many people went over to modern science.

Take for e.g. the experience of my village. In irrigation, previously everybody used to have their own well and they would draw water only as nature provided. You don't over-draw, then nature provides and the next day your well is full again. That technology was evolved over thousands of years by our people. But with scientific advancement those who could afford it, bought machines. The pumps started drawing water not only from their own well, but also the other wells. So science was responsible for implementing an unjust order.

Religion, dharma, civilization, culture, all these terms are almost synonymous. They are coextensive with the entire life. They do not exclude politics, economics, culture or spirituality. Therefore the reconciliation between rational truth and spiritual truth is the most important challenge of our time.

The question is do we have this spiritual language? For Multiversity, it would be a challenging task to work as an interface between the representatives of these two truths – the rational truth, i.e modern science and the spiritual truth i.e religions – because spiritual truth will never die, religion will never die. It has to regain its place in civilization.

In the West, the problem is of de-spiritualization of its intellect, its reason. Our problem is two fold: denationalization (caused by our relationship with the West) and de-

spiritualization (which is partly independent of the West's domination). The West's own de-spiritualization is completely independent of us. Its decadence is not connected with us whereas our decadence is not independent of the West. Both the West and ourselves are responsible for our de-spiritualization.

Shilpa: I have a question for Sailen. Your last comment was about adopting a high school or a college and trying to get them to engage in, what you called, 'local botany', 'local geography', 'local geology', along with their modern counterparts in science.

I think what Jessica raised is that if we continue with the same categorizations, for example, of geology, botany and geography, then we are perpetuating the same mind-set. Today a lot of the science textbooks also say, 'Go and investigate your own community, and collect these samples and analyse them.' It's not a new thing that is happening; it has been growing regularly, especially with the environmental courses being introduced. But the classification and the perpetuation of these kinds of categories, and this breakage of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and of the interconnection between all of them continues in these efforts. That doesn't change.

By localizing science, it in fact gets worse. As Nagarajan said so beautifully, the illiterates of the country still maintain different knowledge systems, and they vary, depending on the conditions in the places that they are from. Now, when you take students to the countryside, and then they try to classify this diverse knowledge into the same science categories, it not only breaks down the existing knowledge and wisdom, but it also perpetuates in students' minds the same colonial thinking which is 'Oh these people are superstitious. They don't even know how to understand their own soil.' So we have to be clear that we don't want to replicate that same mentality in the Multiversity because we are in fact questioning the breakage of the natural world into these categories.

Ashis: I must say that I'm a little disappointed about the way the discussion has gone. I'm disappointed because many of us have gone through this cycle of discussion for the last thirty to thirty five years. I would have thought that in a

group like this, we would have gone a little further. I think Chimni's question was relevant in the sense that are we only providing a critique of Western science or are we suggesting that certain grounds of pathologies are intrinsic or are we also talking of a multiplicity of sciences. That question is straightforward and we should have grappled with it and tried to clarify the position a possible Multiversity could take on that issue.

I don't think frankly that this debate on spiritual versus material rationality of Western science takes us very far. Scientists, modern scientists particularly, are perfectly happy with this argument and this line or reasoning. They are perfectly willing to accept that modern science lacks a spiritual dimension, in fact they take pride in it and they are also perfectly hopeful that our own children will opt for the pathologies of modern science rather than for the beauties of our spirituality. They have that self confidence. Remember this is a classical contradiction which modern science itself has set up, that it is not spiritual, it is deficient in the spiritual dimension, whereas there are great civilizations which have spiritual concerns. So you can from ten to five do nuclear research and from five to ten be a practicing Buddhist and a disciple of the Dalai Lama. This is a very well developed art. Or, you work for the defence ministry or the defence lab in your university between the age of 22 and 42, and once you get tenure, you become active in a peace movement because by the time you are forty two, you are finished as a creative nuclear physicist. Nobody cares two hoots whether you work for the peace movement, but it gives you status and added weightage. The establishment too is happy because it shows that it can tolerate dissent. You can then talk of spiritualism for the rest of your life.

So I'm not concerned about that sort of thing, I consider it self defeating to fall in that binary opposition. I propose that we squarely accept that we are interested in critiques of science that are going on all around the world, but we are also interested in exploring alternative systems of knowledge which have certain kinds of philosophical mooring outside the framework of mainstream science.

Already some elements of mainstream science are trying to break out of this framework because nothing lasts forever. Modern science has lasted four hundred years which is probably the longest time any form of science has lasted in human history. So it also knows that its days are numbered and that the old style rationality is collapsing.

But while they want to rediscover other forms of science by transcending modern science, there are civilizations and cultures which have lived by other forms of knowledge and whose livelihood is woven around them. We don't have to go through the whole process to rediscover what is already visible at the fringes of modern science.

In the meanwhile, the problem is that many more people are willing to suffer from the diseases of civilization than from the beauties of an austere ecosensitive life. That's the tragedy of human nature. Everybody wants to suffer from the diseases of the rich and powerful and not from the diseases of the poor and the powerless. People would rather suffer from cancer and bronchial asthma rather that from cholera and typhoid. In Massachusetts, there is the Harvard medical school and there is the Taft medical school, Taft is perpetually short of cadavers to teach dissection to the anatomy students. In Harvard, every year they turn down people who will their dead bodies to the medical school. So even in death people want to go to the Harvard medical school. So do not have much hope. We will keep the door open for spiritualist critics, but let us be very hard-boiled and try to do something at the ground level.

Yusef: I am also disappointed with this line of thought, but for different reasons. Most studies of science and religion in recent decades have overlooked a crucial point. Western science was developed out of a fringe ideology within Western Christianity called millenarianism, which says that the sciences and mechanical arts are there for man in the fallen state, in the Biblical sense, and that they are all developed and continue to be developed under that driving ideology, which gets bound up with deep cultural assumptions about the divinity of man and paradise on earth. This is why, for example, the atomic bomb test was called Trinity and they gave names from the Bible to their greatest technological and

scientific projects – the human genome, the atomic bomb, artificial intelligence – they imbued these achievements with spiritual significance by giving them names like Adam and Genesis. Similarly, NASA is dominated by Biblical ideology and most of its major scientists are millenarians.

So, it is a mistake to portray Western science as a-spiritual, as outside religion On the contrary it is profoundly spiritual in both theory and practice, and it comes from millenarian Christianity, which has survived the Enlightenment by removing the discourse from the monasteries and bringing it to the laboratories. The best statement on this is by the historian of science and technology David F. Noble, in his two recent books *World without Women: The Clerical Culture of Western Science* and *The Religion of Technology: the Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention.* Evelyn Fox-Keller also discusses this in *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender and Science.*

In my mind, works like these are forcing us to rethink the usual debates about religion and science. Perhaps it could be argued that millenarianism is not a healthy spirituality but it remains a powerful, though misguided, spiritual tradition. In this way, modern Western science is fuelled by the same ideology that fuelled colonialism and other forms of Western imperialism. The acrimonious arguments among proponents of religion and science are smoke screens covering the reality that Western science proceeds from and continues to be informed by the Westernised belief system known as millenarianism.

Rajiv: The term spirituality has several connotations, it has been also incorporated by modern developers. For example even the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury have launched a new enterprise called World Faith Development Dialogue. This is how the conquest goes on. Let us interpret spirituality as essentially nonviolence which must express itself in the economic, political, cultural and moral behaviour of the people. Spirituality is basically that. Spirituality can't have its own feet, independent of economic life, independent of political life, independent of cultural and intellectual life. So how can you say that modern science through its internal corrections can reach to that level. Because it is essentially not there.

Ashis: I'm not saying it will reach. The nature of science, science as a culture, is very autonomous. If you ask one hundred practicing physicists today including Nobel Laureates, what was the nature of the work of Tolonivov, I do not think that ninety nine of them will be able to even say that. They will say that he was a great scientist, that's about all. Science is a-historical, a-cultural, a-moral. So the question you ask will be declared as basically irrelevant to the practice of modern science or not intrinsic to the nature of science. It is an important question in itself but it is not in the domain of science. It is not a part of Christian spirituality for the simple reason that Christianity till the beginning of modern science, never distinguished between the domains of aesthetics, ethics and knowledge as exclusive. So good knowledge had to be true, beautiful and moral. Incidentally, the best response to your question has been given by Jit Singh Uberoi in *Science and Culture.*

Jessica: I'm feeling really frustrated that we're putting all our energy into critiquing and discussing the pitfalls of Western science when really we should be talking about what are the things that this Multiversity project can do that are different from Western science. We're preaching to the converted. We know what the pitfalls are of Western science, we know it's a project of colonialism, we know it's patriarchal, we know it's reductionist, we know it's mechanistic, we all know this and don't need to spend our time talking about the pitfalls of Western science. We need to talk instead about what Multiversity can to do in the area of science. And maybe, because science is such a loaded term, we don't need to even call it science. Perhaps we need a different label for it. Let's move the discussion away from the numerous pitfalls.

Sailen: Jessica found in my presentation a non-change in the mind-set. If my talk about the bounteousness in-built in nature, if my talk on the vast difference in ecosystemic conditions between the temperate and tropical conditions is not a plea for the change of the mind-set, if it does not induce a reverence for nature, if it does not introduce a change in the attitude of making a beeline for the nature conquering technologies, then I must consider myself a failure in communication. My plea definitely was for a change of mind-set.

Secondly, we must recognize that broadly, there are two kinds of science – reductionist science and organismic science. Reductionist science wants to do studies on still lower levels, organismic science goes up, the organism level, then the population level, then the world level. The juxtaposition of both these sciences, reductionist science and organismic science is a drive towards holistic science.

I would not say that we shall ever be able to attain holistic science. Because like attainment of Brahman, this is also somewhat impossible. But a drive towards holistic science will mean a juxtaposition of these two. While I plead for organismic science that has been neglected, I'm not pleading for a dismantling of the reductionist science laboratories, since I concede the need for that also.

I generally avoid the word Western science, because three centuries back, the West also had the same kind of organic science, since they too used to learn from the ways of nature. In the eastern tradition of course it was much more pronounced.

Nature conquering technology and reductionist science, is bad even for the Western people. The difference between the West and the tropical countries is that the mid-latitude countries have a much stronger cushion for absorbing the ill effects of nature conquering technology. Therefore, the manifestation of their evils is delayed. That is why they take much more time to realize the dangers.

The purpose of Multiversity would be to create a climate for the growth or the practice of peoples' science. We have to create conditions, whereby peoples' science and peoples' technologies will develop. The test of whether or not Multiver-

I would like to define our venture basically as an effort to unencumber the coming generations. This removal of encumbrances, removal of surplus emotional and cognitive burden, requires not only a different way of looking at the global knowledge system, but also a certain healthy scepticism and robust doubt about it, at least a suspicion that the dominance is not the sign of finality.

sity is successful will be whether we are able to create conditions for the growth and upsurge of people scientists – scientists and technologists from among the people. That should be the object of the Multiversity.

MULTIVERSITY STRUCTURE

Ashis Nandy

I have been requested to focus on what could possibly be the major methodological assumptions of a programme such as this. Let me start with a few preliminary comments.

Have you ever tried to breathe normally and count the number of breaths you take? If you try you will find that it is impossible to count your breath and breathe normally. Self-consciousness has its cost. For a number of years in my early life, I worked on human creativity and potentialities and I can confidently say that any endeavour such as the Multiversity is a design for hope, an attempt to release human potentialities. Unfortunately, we are caught in a double bind.

We enter this venture because we want to decolonize knowledge, we want to relieve or release systems of knowledge and people practising them from the hegemony of a global structure. To do so, we need some degree of self-consciousness, a critical awareness. But too much of self-awareness can be self-destructive too. It's like trying to breathe self-consciously, yet normally.

I would like to define our venture basically as an effort to unencumber the coming generations. This removal of encumbrances, removal of surplus emotional and cognitive burden, requires not only a different way of looking at the global knowledge system, but also a certain healthy scepticism and robust doubt about it, at least a suspicion that the dominance is not the sign of finality. I think the thing that holds us back – and I want to emphasize this because it could be the basic point of departure for an enterprise such as this despite all our intellectual and ideological differences – is a growing, continuous fear of people that colours our systems of education, our systems of knowledge, our professions.

The documentary *The Many Faces of Madness* we have just seen showed us just now that 80% of Indians still go to the traditional practitioners of medicine. A figure more or less endorsed by a small survey C.V. Seshadri did once in Madras. But if you look at India's plan documents, you will not find any mention of this fact. The planning is conducted as if this 80% do not exist. Now that also is not the whole truth. In fact, that would have been easier to handle because India is still an open system and that 80% in the long run would have mattered.

But, these systems of medicine, with which 80% of India lives are packaged in the form of three or four major systems of traditional medicine for which there is an all-India council under the Ministry of Health to which the government dutifully and ritually gives a grant every year, sustains a bureaucracy for the purpose, and feels that it's duty is done. In fact, they will be very unhappy if you take their venture in that area seriously, because everybody knows it's basically a ritual. This is not only the case in medicine. In all spheres of life you see similar attempts to package, enshrine, ritualise and turn into a symbolic gesture all reluctant acknowledgements of popular practices because of the omnipresent fear of the people.

The real task of a group such as this would be to first of all not only identify the systems but to recognize that these 80% of Indians who take recourse to traditional systems of medicines do not all go to Ayurvedic, Unani or Siddha practitioners. These are the well known schools, the classical systems of traditional medicine. They have texts, they have living traditions, perhaps to some extent they can take care of themselves; they can even become fashionable upto a point. People will be much more uncomfortable – even people who work on traditional systems of medicine, either in India or in the famous universities all over the world – if you point out to them that there are at least one hundred and fifty different major systems of medicine in India. A huge majority of them are not prestigious, they do not have texts, they are dependant often on small communities and gradually one by one, they are dying out.

It is our fear of that chaos and the anarchy of plurality which often prompts us to opt for the dominant systems. I do not think it is purely the love of the Western systems in all cases. We are often looking for something which many of us feel will give some coherence and meaning to an otherwise unmanageable, ungovernable multitude of diverse communities and people.

My second proposition therefore is that apart from the fear of people that we have to master, there is a fear of chaos, a fear of plurality of thought. It is a strange comment from a person coming from a civilization which is often called Brahmanic. But I do notice a fear of thought which is covered up with the help of two or three popular slogans.

One of them is that we talk a lot and do very little. Even if you examine the way Gandhi has been incorporated into the national pantheon and turned into a mascot of modern India, the official slogan is that the old man did not only think, he did. I'm grateful to P.K Mahadevan, the Gandhian scholar, for pointing out in his marvellous little book, *Dwija*, that Gandhi went out on the streets only twice in his life; the rest of the time he was thinking. When Jawaharlal Nehru in utter desperation once said, 'Bapu, you are far greater that your little books,' by which he mainly meant *Hind Swaraj*, he was implying that Gandhi not being a conventional, constructive thinker, he was pluralizing thought too much and even speaking against modernity. I am sorry to admit that Gandhi was actually very destructive. As Sankaran Nair once said Gandhi has taken a position on every issue against the greatest sons of nineteenth century India.

That subversiveness in thought, we shall somehow have to capture and I do believe that a Multiversity, whatever else it might do, cannot but challenge this built-in fear and anxiety about thinking. The world is increasingly being dominated by categories, not by institutions. It is categories that have won over our children and I hope they won't win over our grandchildren.

My third proposition is that Multiversity must strongly reaffirm the political and rediscover the political dimension of intellectual and social interventions. Yesterday, Makarand made a comment which disturbed me no end. If I remember it

correctly, he said, Gandhi taught us to ignore power. Makarand, I'm sorry to say that nothing can be further from the truth. I like to quote Arnold Toynbee's obituary of Gandhi in 1948: 'Henceforth, mankind will ask its prophets, are you willing to live in the slum of politics?'

I think a venture such as the Multiversity must at some point of time decide to live, if not in the slum of politics, at least in the slum of the politics of knowledge. That is the least we can do. After all, half of the intellectuals present here are activists, too. But even those of us who live a life of the mind, at least we can live with some awareness of dominant politics of knowledge today.

I like the expression of Mohd. Idris that the Multiversity should be like a banyan tree. But if it is to be a banyan tree, let us have adequate political sensitivity to first accommodate under its shade those who have been marginalized and cornered, not only as the third world of knowledge, but as the fourth and fifth worlds of knowledge within the third world too. That is a crucial part of the story of our times.

I'm aware that in the last thirty-five years or so, those of us who have been working in this area have attracted only a small stream of intellectuals and activists to these issues. But in recent years, their numbers have increased enormously. Therefore I am not pessimistic. Nevertheless, what in the 1980s we were expecting to be an intellectual movement has become, at best, an intellectual school. That is disappointing because an intellectual school is not what we are looking for. We are looking for a movement which will have different ramifications not only in the world of knowledge but also in the outside world. But even a school is not bad, because it shows that we have worked, successfully or unsuccessfully, willingly or unwillingly, by design or by accident, as the research secretariat of hundreds of movements going around the world.

I would like the scope of this part of the story to be expanded. I expect the Multiversity to be the unofficial, unacknowledged research secretariat, a clearing house for a new generation of movements, intellectual or otherwise. I know that the best may not still come to us, that our best brains go to Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Man-

agement – frankly, at one time I used to be troubled that for the kind of work we want, we often didn't get the right people – but now I don't see it as a loss. The Third World can probably do with second rate brains, as long as it gets first rate hearts. Let the best go to the IITs, the IIMs and find their niches. We can do with the second best, as long as they have commitment and integrity.

It is also not accidental that many of our kind have come out of the de-professionalised sector, from among those who have disowned their disciplines and training. Probably, after a point, the theory of self education applies there. I'm told that as long as Japan was booming economically, it didn't have any school of business management. Others began to write books on the Japanese style of doing business, so the Japanese increasingly became self-conscious and established a number of schools of business in the 1980s. My private theory is that the Japanese economy began to decline from then onwards.

Fourthly, we live in a world where consent is manufactured. This has a moral implication; we must look with some degree of compassion or at least tolerance towards those who find their salvation in the present-day dominant system. I have seen the kind of hunger in the Indian middle classes for things like Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola because the younger generation did not live through the days when they were banned in India for something like twenty years. That only increased the thirst for the two colas and in retrospect one could say that nobody did so much for the Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola Corporations as Mr. George Fernandes did by banning them. People even brought back bottles of Coca Cola as valued gifts when they went abroad. I think the Indian middle class is now going through a consumption explosion because the market is now opening up. I sometimes suspect that a humane solution to the problem will be to make it compulsory in India to drink half a dozen bottles of Coca Cola every day, and a couple of Hamburgers and Pizza. Maybe after a few years we will be able to talk about other things.

In this manufacturing of consent, there are two modes. One is through socialization and education, which we have talked about. The other mode, which we have not talked

about, is still relatively open ended. Consent is also manufactured through a systematic occupation of free time. One important feature of the global middle class culture today is that, while working hours might have shrunk, leisure has gradually been taken over by exactly those organizations or institutions which control work. Leisure has become a professionalized, expert-dominated, domain of life. You cannot go for a holiday without expert advice, without checking it out on the Internet and without consulting your travel agent. Enormous planning is involved in going for a holiday. Enormous planning is involved in even getting yourself entertained. However, I suspect that the domain of leisure is still relatively less controlled than the domain of work.

One final comment. Mohd Idris said yesterday that the reality component of the dominant systems of knowledge is poor. Frankly, if you ask me, the reality component is poor but the fantasy component is poorer. I see very little imagination, very little scope for dreaming. The present day dominant system in fact proscribes dreaming by third world societies. You cannot have a vision of your future. Your future is expected to be no different from the contemporary West. By the time we become contemporary West, the West will be somewhere else and we will always be Johnnies come lately. Presently, that's our vision of the future. Our present is the West's past and our future is the West's present. So in some sense our present and future have both been hijacked.

So, while I am worried about the absence of the reality component, I am also worried about the absence of the component of imagination, dreaming and play. Our children are forgetting to dream, they are forgetting to envision the world for themselves.

Discussion

Sailen: When you talk of the world in terms of first world, second world, third world, you inject in yourself a kind of inferiority. I have a feeling, that the so called first world will be the fourth world sometime later, because it is becoming more and more unsustainable. We should avoid this word 'third world' as far as possible. I would like to call it tropical world because nature has made this permanent division.

Countries of the south, that area bounded by the tropic of cancer on the north and the tropic of Capricorn on the south, where most people live, can be called these tropical countries. So I plead for this change of nomenclature.

Shilpa: I think that the idea of possibility, just to engage with possibility, not in the negative 'what-we-can't-do', but in the positive 'what-we-can-do' sense, to support that kind of unlearning process, is one of the roles of the Multiversity. The present system encourages fear. There is fear of the unknown or fear of uncertainty which emerges because of the whole system of conditioning. You are told constantly, 'There can't be any other way. This is the best system. There is no alternative.' So there is a complete shutdown of possibilities, a complete shutdown of uncertainties. And this is what we must undo.

Multiversity should also strive to promote a kind of consistency in intellectual and activist work. Too often, youth are very disillusioned by the lack of consistency – adults say one thing, and do another. So why should they follow what you say? This is not to say that everyone is 100% consistent, but efforts to forge this great divide between theory and practice should be at least visible. For example, if you talk about labour and the importance of working with one's hands, well, then you have to be able to make the connection between thinking and doing.

Similarly with our critiques and the questions we're raising. While it's very important to raise critiques about what Western institutions are doing right now, it's also very important to raise critiques about what the manifestations of those institutions are doing in India. Multiversity should help to make a serious assessment, of the ways in which these institutions are wreaking destruction. This means getting out of the attitude of 'take-the-best-from-the-West'. Is this possible? Or are we going to be entirely inconsistent with our own critiques?

The last thing I want to speak about is control. This also relates to the chaos and multiplicity-of-views idea that Ashis brought up. From what I've sensed, even in some of our own discussions, we seem to want Multiversity to be under our

control and to know in advance how the learning will happen, what kind of texts people will read, what kind of projects they will pursue, what kinds of forms Multiversity will take.

I think we have to be willing also to embrace the unknown, to embrace the organic or the self-organising aspect of the Multiversity, to give it space and time to see how it unfolds. It means not confining ourselves to ordering and organising Multiversity in a particular way. It means that we not only describe Multiversity's organisation, but also ensure that there is space for disorganisation – for letting different pieces fall off, and letting other things grow and emerge in their place. This means opening up spaces for the Multiversity to fall apart in some ways. We can't be too wedded or attached to certain aspects of it. We have to believe that from that fall, or from that change, new life will grow. Otherwise, the Multiversity will become a set framework, and many of the pitfalls of existing institutions will be replicated in it.

If we don't have that openness in ourselves, then it is going to be very difficult for someone else, who wants to become involved in the Multiversity, to actually co-create and continue this process. I think that kind of co-creative process will be really important, as we involve more and more people in the Multiversity process.

Pawan: One of the things that Multiversity could do is to find out how different people in this world look at themselves and how they look at the world around them. This includes subjects like gender, justice, equity, money, the market. This could be documented and used in a variety of ways – for example, in text books, or in booklets for dissemination among the people who are going to be learning, so that learners recognise that there are diverse ways of looking at the world.

I believe we need to create doubts in people's minds. The present system controls the mind by training it or rather forcing it to reduce reality to the framework of modern knowledge systems and creating the illusion that that is the truth. So, instead of thinking about alternative systems of curricula, could we first create doubts in people's minds about the present knowledge system?

For example, we could create courses on topics such as the politics of science and technology and discuss its so-called neutrality vis-a-vis the assumptions actually embedded in its philosophy or the logic behind all knowledge systems. We need to discuss how systems control us without our being aware of it and what its control mechanisms are. We could talk about freedom, how modern society looks at freedom, how the traditional societies looked at freedom, what is individual freedom versus freedom of the community or society? We could talk about spaces and expressions of solidarity and how they challenge the authority of the nation-state or how the nation-state subverts freedom. We could have courses on the distinction between nationalism and patriotism and the limitations of the modern democratic state.

Lastly I wish to talk about Attitude. I think attitude governs everything else, so what is the kind of attitude we are going to be cultivating or be conscious of in Multiversity? Language is also a very important issue. If we are going to conduct our business only in English, then I think we are going to lose out somewhere on what we're trying to do, because it's going to limit the discourse and will keep a large majority of our people who maybe thinking on their own, out of this discourse. I'm not saying that we should refrain from using English. All I'm saying is how do we make it more inclusive by including languages from different regions? That's something we'll have to address ourselves to in Multiversity.

Rajiv: I closely studied the Gandhian movement as one of the major answers to what is generally called the domination of the organized West. Gandhiji used the term 'Swaraj'. Swaraj allows for the multiplicity and plurality of expressions of the individuals in a self controlled, self restrained culture. The Nai Talim experiment of renationalizing Indian education and respiritualising the Indian intellect was perhaps a microcosm Multiversity.

The problem is that we don't have any guiding text today which has a comprehensive view of modernism except this small but very profound book – *Hind Swaraj*. This text looks at the modern way of life, modern ways of thinking and

modern spirituality. I am advocating this book as a text which must be interpreted, reinterpreted, written about as many times as possible, then we will know where our sociology, our economics and our science stand. We don't have any alternative *shastras* for the things which we are talking about. Multiversity can have a lot of plurality of thought, but it must have a basic unity of purpose, basic commitment to things which are just, truthful and non violent.

Secondly, who are our collaborators and allies in this project? This is very important because the modern system has created collaborators within us, making it really very difficult to identify who belongs to this stream to which we think we belong and who are actually the collaborators of the West. Somebody asked Mahatma Gandhi in 1925 when he thought the Britishers would go away. And he said, they will go away when they have created a class of brokers from amongst us, repeating exactly the same things which Macaulay and others wrote hundred years ago, while defining the purpose of colonization and imperial rule, because the purpose of the modern education system to create this class. So, who are our collaborators?

Finally, public education is most important. I see in public awareness a great echo of what we are thinking. It would be completely wrong to think that we are a small minority. Maybe it is so in the intellectual world with which some of those present here are identified. However, I don't think that what is going on in our minds is not commonly going on in the minds of millions and millions of people, as well. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked how he did this miracle, his reply was 'I did nothing. I just gave words to what millions of people have been thinking.' So, can our language become understandable by these millions of people?

Anwar: When the question of the structure of Multiversity was discussed, we realised we can learn a lot from the rain forest and from the way organisms work. We know that there are different kinds of working methods that you need for different kinds of tasks. For some things you need order, and for some chaos. For some things you often need very open systems that can actually reenergize you, just as floods

energize the soil. We have developed five concepts, linking and multiplying being very fundamental elements.

The first is operating as a community. The second is using all three generations in the enterprise. Many enterprises become locked in one generation, move with that generation and die with that generation. And it requires archaeology to rediscover them and in the meantime you have lost time. So, constantly locking in these three generations in a very interactive way means that you have a movement that draws from past and at the same time is building as it were, the future.

The third is to recognise is that we cannot make any transformational change without politics and power. Thinking about power is understanding what moves societies, what makes change, and unless you know power systems and how politics works, you cannot make power work for you. So, linking up with political movements, political ideas and challenging them if necessary becomes very important.

The fourth is designing a range of very concrete activities that people could link up with at different stages. Some can be simple things that you don't need anybody anywhere to necessarily work with you, others can be activities which require an organization or partnerships with other organizations. Still others may require a very strong formal structure e.g. if one wants to make representations to the UN system.

The fifth is recognising that everything is actually connected. We call it glocal – not global, not local, but both. When you talk about grass roots movements, the moment you are grass, the first thing you see is the sky. And you're actually global by just looking and being part of the sky. Having that kind of concept also breaks away from this grass roots versus the big business or global business because everything actually is connected and they are interrelated. Once people see that, it enables them to see the global and local link immediately as an integral link. Also, when you want to fight against multinational corporations, or you look at global governance, you realise that also means something to you locally.

As regards the symbols I talked about, linking and multiplying, we used the 'minus' sign (negative) to remind us that

we have to be very powerful in critiquing the things that we want to criticize. The 'plus' sign (positive) reminds us to look at all the alternatives that we want to create. The 'multiply' sign is how to multiply the numbers of people that are taking part in our activities. The 'divide' sign reminds that divisions will constantly appear. If people know that diversity is actually unity, that divisions are going to be used as strengths, they do not fear differences of opinion. So, using these four symbols of minus, plus, multiply and divide we have a useful way of moving forward in an enterprise such as Multiversity.

Ashis: I wish to raise a concrete issue. Do we want to concentrate on problems and domains which are already being studied, because the skills are available to us, or do we want to leave them alone because they are already being studied, and concentrate on problems and domains which are less studied. After all, we cannot study everything; we have to choose. For example, we can say, deforestation is a problem but we will not go by that alone as it will be only one part of a story. We shall concentrate on rain forests. So we have a domain called rain forests under which we shall study deforestation and also tropical ecology of forests. Both are feasible approaches. The question is, which of the two do we choose?

Anwar: My answer is you actually have to do both kinds of things constantly. You have work in both approaches. The skill in Multiversity is actually in opening the windows. Gandhi said, once the windows are open people can see each other, and link with each other, find the connections and make the transformations. So that's how Multiversity should do it.

Makarand: In criticizing the dominant system, I'm wondering whether we are not in fact simplifying it in some ways. I don't think that its history has been unvaried and unchanging over a period of time. I think even the world order in the last fifty years has been in the process of constant change. Personally, I have no pressing *anxiety* about the West and its domination anymore. I would agree entirely with Mr. Idris who called it a paper tiger. But, I would like to ask, what is the mainstream? What is the dominant and what is the alternative? I'm not interested in the alternative. I'm inter-

ested in the mainstream. I'd like to change the mainstream. As far as India is concerned, I believe that I belong to the mainstream. I don't think I'm a marginalized person in India. So how can I constantly complain of being marginalized? And if we are not deprived or marginalized in any way but are constantly talking about marginalisation, then we are actually talking about the marketing of margins, because if we are not the dominant, who is the dominant? I ask this question in all seriousness.

If codes and ideologies are the drivers of the system, then the utilities are institutional practices and formation. I think that where we are failing in the third world is that we don't have any institutions. We have lots of thought. There's incredible variety and volume of criticism available in India. But what is lacking are even five or six reasonably well run institutions where something can be implemented.

Hind Swaraj is important because it is not *merely* a critique of the West, but it is about India, it's about diagnosing what's happening to our civilization. So rather than constantly focussing on the West and on Western hegemony, I think we should look at ourselves, and not be obsessed with them.

I believe that many of us love the West in our own peculiar ways. We visit there, we live there, we are fellows of this or that, we constantly interact. So we are a part of this game, if you want to call it that. Therefore, as somebody located in India, I want to see what's happening to India, and what we can do with the means that we have today, rather than just being anti-Western in a predictable way.

One of the things I suggest that Multiversity should be doing is not just critiquing the West, but critiquing those people within our societies, who are blocking our own projects of growth and civilization. I think we have to define who we are, what we need to be doing and start doing those things. I believe this has already been happening and the distortions that colonialism has induced, will, over a period of time, be destroyed or defeated. They are not going to be perpetual. Nobody can rule perpetually. Even when you talk about manufacturing consent, it can't be done all the time. Let us not take the lazy escape route of a politics of blame but

instead evolve a politics of change. So, Multiversity, among other things, should expose our own ruling classes, that is ourselves, and our complicities with various systems of power, which are going against this 80% on whose behalf we are ruling.

Vinay: I find it very strange that the argument is that all of us belong to the dominant elites, and that somehow we fail to recognize that none of us is marginalized. Domination, class, oppression are relational categories. Some are subalterns in relation to others, who are in turn subaltern to others, etc. etc. I think you have to grant a greater degree of self reflectivity to the people who are involved in this particular enterprise.

Multiversity it seems to me, has to make us aware of something that is completely counter-intuitive to the vast majority of people in the world, namely, that our choices in the world are rapidly diminishing, not increasing at this moment. I say it is counter-intuitive because when you think of choice, immediately you have to think of the fact that certain models of how we think about choice are imported largely from the European-American world.

As far as America is concerned, whether a country is democratic or not is the litmus test of whether people are free to exercise choice. It would be really nice if America had free elections in its own country and Americans had real choice instead of having two parties which really represent the same standpoint. Or you go to a supermarket, you've got a choice of seventy toothpastes, and then you to look at the fine print, and find that all of them are made by two companies. So what I'm suggesting is that we have to transplant the notion of choice and try to understand how it works with respect to the kinds of things we are interested in.

Our choices, including the possibilities of dissent, are rapidly diminishing because one of the things that the Western academy, and the Western corporate culture have become very successful at doing is taking models of dissent from elsewhere and eventually absorbing them, incorporating them, transforming them.

Now let me move to one concrete proposal that I'd like Multiversity to take up. One of the most striking things about

the Chiapas rebellion is that when it broke out on 1 January 1994, the Zapatistas were able to make considerable headway without having fired a single shot, because they resorted, in part, to the internet. This is the first instance that I know of, where you have internet activism on a massive scale, and it is very successful. Again, if you move to the first real set of demonstrations in Seattle against the new WTO regime, the internet was absolutely critical in forging this.

In fact fourth world people, as it were, have used internet activism in a significant way. There are all kinds of aboriginal groups, indigenous groups that have made links with each other largely through the internet when in fact they weren't even aware of the existence of other groups five to ten years ago. It seems to me that Multiversity is going to have to think of web activism in a big way, particularly because we are speaking about people who are scattered all over.

What particular shape it will take, it's hard to say at this particular juncture. But, in addition to the kinds of conversations that we are thinking of, print media, lists of books and so on, I think that internet should also be one aspect of the Multiversity program.

I think the university is a good place for Multiversity to begin with, teaching disciplines like indigenous science and then moving out and teaching other disciplines that are indigenous based. Maybe with the support of Multiversity, we will have the strength and the knowledge and the resources to be able to do that. I like the idea of web activism and of building networks and relationships with people. Maybe we can effect radical change inside the university.

But we need to be outside the system as well. If we focus all our efforts on universities and on tertiary study, we'll be missing a large majority of the population who haven't been through formal schooling or haven't succeeded in formal schooling. So we need to be constantly cognizant of other people who don't make it into the system, and provide for them too at all levels.

The last point that I want to bring to the table is that Multiversity is many things all at once. I think we are here to recognize that because there are numerous cultures there

are many different ways of doing things and there is validity in diverse realities. We are not here to find one way that is the Multiversity way for how we are going to be. We are here to accept that all the diverse realities are true and correct for those people who hold them. So it's really important not to come to this position where we are trying to create something that's a single mind-set, but to realize that we are actually working with different realities all at the same time.

I ask you to challenge yourself in terms of how you're seeing it in your head: are you seeing something that's a structure in terms of how corporate structure organizations are, or are we seeing something that's more circular, something that's spread out all over the place.

Yusef: What is the existing academic set up? Is it a set up or is it already diffused? Where is this academic set up that we are talking about, that we are constructing ourselves either inside of or outside of? I think we need a better understanding of what the existing academic set up looks like on a global scale.

There are already multiple things going on in education around the world. The conventional universities are being challenged from within the West itself right now. Do we want to understand what's going on in higher education? Or do we want to just let it run its course and do our own thing? If we do that, we might be able to salvage something from that system, possibly take advantage if we still work in universities of this uncertainty on an individual level with our students. That might entail trying to work not on an entirely institutional level, which is already being faced with a lot of attack from different quarters, but, instead, when nobody is looking, doing some real teaching with your students who happen to be in the system.

Can we push the system into new ways of being and acting? We're probably going to be playing in a follow up mode to that, I think, because it's already being pushed with far more power than we can probably muster. Maybe we can attract to Multiversity people within the existing system who have similar outlooks and have been marginalized by the system. But I'm not really sure what to do with this existing

academic set up, because I don't know where it is or what it is.

There's an intellectual enclosure movement going on now, similar to the enclosure movement of land and the environment that happened a couple of hundred years ago. So another question is, can we provide some reservations, or some areas that are not going to be enclosed? Can we keep the commons vibrant and lively? And I think that the internet is a good place to start this. Do you want to set up another building with another set of offices and another set of hierarchies and things, or do you want to keep it diffused? Maybe diffusion and mobility become power these days.

As individuals, if we can have a toe in institutions but also put a lot of our energy into something that's diffused and mobile around the world like the internet, I think that we can probably take advantage of what's left in the conventional academic set up but build something that is not dependant upon it. So, if it falls down, we don't go down with it, but at the same time, those of us who might like or enjoy working in a conventional university setting won't need to necessarily leave that either.

As teachers, we always have a lot of space in our own classrooms, which hasn't yet been enclosed. I think we should fight to take advantage of that space that we have with our students, wherever those classrooms are and whoever those students are. The all seeing eye of corporate power wants to take that away from us, by having us use, ironically, the internet, in a way that would allow them to have surveillance of the things that we are doing. So in that sense, the internet is a double edged sword. On the other hand there are interesting things happening on internet. We should study what's happening to the diffused mobile institutions, too, like the internet.

There are two websites that I'd like to draw your attention to, that have two different models of what can be done on the internet. One is called RaiseTheFist.com. This was an activist website that had a tremendous following in North America and parts of Europe. It was a one man show, operating out of some one's house. It had radical articles, and it was a portal to various news and activism sites. It had a certain way of talking about the world that was especially appealing to

young people. So after a while you even found Raise the Fist clubs set up in high schools etc. It became a sort of popular, youthful dissent that this person pulled together on his website.

Well, one night the FBI came in, they arrested him, they carted away everything in his house, books, files, computer, all of it. They simply pulled the plug. That was it. End of website. End of that type of activism, for the time being at least.

There's another website called indymedia.org. They are diffused all over the place. These people pioneered web activism during Seattle, where they actually had activists sending in pictures, reports and video live while it happened, scooping the corporate media. They've got about fifteen or twenty separate portals in different countries. So for Germany it could be de.indymedia.org, for Africa it would be za, or for New York City it would be nyc. etc. So you need to look for all of the different portals to effectively shut them down. Nobody can pull the plug on them in the same way they did on RaiseTheFist.com.

So, two models: one is diffused and mobile, and seems to be working very well; one was centralized and they pulled the plug. Both were saying very similar things, but I think the structure in one case was the weakness while it was the strength in the other case.

Rajiv: There are some very committed people who are outdated and outmoded in their knowledge of the technical realities around them and this changing situation takes the initiative out of their hands. So they are slowly marginalised and made completely irrelevant to play any significant role vis-à-vis the community within which they are working. Can

There are two enterprises that need to happen when any culture does something of the kind that I suggested. One consists of recuperating its own dissenting, recessive, marginalized traditions. The second is obviously to pluralize. One cannot say that medicine, science, physics – to take three examples – are all Western categories. Science is not a Western category. Western science is a category that we're worried about. How did all of these things get so homogenized that whenever we say science, immediately the assumption is that we're referring to Western science? If we reflect on this it will be amply clear that this is not at all a project of mimicking the categories of the West.

Multiversity become the vehicle for transferring this knowledge, this information, this understanding to such persons?

Makarand: If we want to have a Multiversity, then we should make it free for anybody to enrol, or perhaps the fees should be very nominal so that it's not money that determines access to education, access to knowledge. We should also have different types of resources which we should be able to make available to all kinds of people.

Anwar: The Multiversity needs to have some core activities, like a learning centre and some nodes/groups which will act as partnerships and be facilitated by all of us. In the learning centre our courses could offer very specific modules which perhaps are not offered in the normal circumstances. Multiversity can also have learning systems which are mentor related, for example somebody may want to do self directed learning but also wants to link up with an individual. People can link up with a particular node or participate in the core activity too.

I see different kinds of things available but they must be run by people who make a commitment to run them. We will have labs, but not in the sense that we do it ourselves. Instead we try and develop networks of labs that are inter-

ested in public interest work. Or we have 'counter labs' that will actually help uncover suppressed information. That's the kind of role that I see for Multiversity.

Vinay: The biggest objection to the Multiversity enterprise is going to be that you can't do away, wholesale, with everything that now comes under the rubric of the West. What about all the various products of the enlightenment? For e.g. as far as science and technology goes, I don't think anybody here is talking about doing away with science. We are talking about the fact that there is only one homogenous idea of science that has dominated the world and we are therefore trying to pluralize the idea.

Pawan: I agree that this is the primary problem that Multiversity will face, but unless we demolish these things, there's no point in talking about what are we going to do. So the first task before us should be to demolish these categories, these tools of interpretation, these reference points. And I don't see any other way of doing it but by creating doubts or dissonance in people's minds.

The speed at which rural youth, or people from small towns accept anything urban, anything Western as good for everyone is amazing. Anything 'scientific' is without question imbibed. So how do we counter that? I think that can be countered only by creating doubts and dissonance in people's minds.

Ashis earlier asked: do we talk of specifics or do we talk of domains? I will go squarely with domains. We pick up domains, areas, where we want to raise doubts in people's minds, so that people stop believing things without questioning. We need to raise the awareness of people regarding the assumptions that operate in the delivery of goods and services. Today they believe that there are no assumptions and that everything is working in a very logical, rational way. But if we can point out that even they have assumptions all the time and get them to figure out what those assumptions are, I think that we can get them to do some original critical thinking about important issues that matter to them. Maybe five years or ten years hence, we can think of other subjects, but at the moment I think that should be the primary focus of Multiversity.

Jessica: We certainly do not want to be mimicking the categories that are already in existence within Western institutions. But, it is also important to remember that there are also a whole lot of other categories that aren't in Western institutions because Western institutions choose not to study them.

Personally, I don't want to put my energy in responding anymore to the colonisers, or responding to how colonization has defined Western science. I'm more interested in being proactive and helping to develop an alternative discourse which for me is more empowering or to work amongst diverse communities to develop different types of knowledge.

Vinay: There are two enterprises that need to happen when any culture does something of the kind that I suggested. One consists of recuperating its own dissenting, recessive, marginalized traditions. The second is obviously to pluralize. One cannot say that medicine, science, physics – to take three examples – are all Western categories. Science is not a Western category. Western science is a category that we're worried about. How did all of these things get so homogenized that whenever we say science, immediately the assumption is that we're referring to Western science? If we reflect on this it will be amply clear that this is not at all a project of mimicking the categories of the West.

Makarand: The question in my mind is: Is science the same as *vigyan*? I'm not sure it is. In Ayurveda, for example, there is no category as medicine; Well being is a category.

Rajiv: What Vinay is suggesting is very interesting. It is true that we have a lot of knowledge about ourselves from the Western standpoint, but we don't have much knowledge of the West from our standpoint. If you have to conquer somebody, you have to know them.

4

The Need for Multiversity

The world as we know it today is understood almost entirely through categories that are largely the product of Western knowledge systems and the academic disciplines that have been charged with codifying, disciplining, organizing, institutionalizing and transmitting knowledge not only about the physical and material world, but about the various social, political, cultural, religious, and legal institutions and practices found among the diverse human communities that have inhabited the world over the last few thousand years.

Thus, in February 2002, acting at the insistence of S. M. Mohamed Idris, founder of the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP), the Third World Network (TWN, also in Penang), and a host of other organizations, as well as Claude Alvares, a public intellectual, scholar, and activist based in Goa, about twenty people from India, Malaysia, the United States, New Zealand, and the Emirates convened in Penang over three days to discuss the contemporary politics of knowledge systems, the consequences of the imposition of the West upon the entire world, the various ways in which the decolonization of academic disciplines can be attempted and achieved, and the role that activists and intellectuals of the South, whether based in the South or the North, can

play in harvesting theories of knowledge, livelihoods and life-styles, and forms of political awareness that are calculated to create more genuine forms of equality, justice, and plurality.

The age of exploration and navigation, which commenced in Europe a little over 500 years old, eventually paved the way for the colonization of the Americas, South and South-east Asia, the Near East, Polynesia, Africa, and other parts of the world over the course of the next 200–300 years. In some respects the effects of colonization were remarkably similar, but even marginally complex narratives of European colonization point to significant differences between, for example, the ideology of the British in India, the extraordinary swagger of the conquistadors who wove their way through central and South America, and the stern subjugation of African people by the Boers in the Transvaal and elsewhere in South Africa. In the Americas and Australia, the indigenous Indian populations were decimated, and though what might be described as holocaust demography is a contested terrain, it is reasonable to aver that in a few short decades 90% of Indians of some tribes had been wiped out. In Tasmania, the Aboriginals were rendered entirely extinct.

In Africa, on the other hand, there were lopsided battles between Europeans and native populations fought in the late nineteenth century which resulted in thousands of fatalities on the African side and a handful on the European side; in the Congo, the same results, that is the extreme brutalization of the native people by the Europeans, were achieved in European-owned rubber plantations. While the word 'genocide' cannot be used unequivocally in describing these phenomena that are diverse and yet are invariably grounded in histories of the European colonization of the world, there is no doubt that Europe's colonization of the world, when it did not lead to the decimation or extermination of native people, resulted in the extinction of life-styles, cultural life forms, and the biological, cultural, and social inheritance of various societies.

The comparative study of colonialism points to numerous other ways in which the European impact was experienced differently across colonies. Historians have drawn distinc-

tions between plantation colonies, settler colonies, and other colonies with varying degrees of direct and indirect rule. Some colonies, such as India, were large and critical to the enterprise of the Empire; the large indentured labor force that worked on the plantations in Trinidad, Fiji, and Malaysia, to name only three countries, was drawn largely from India. It has often been remarked that the British in India out-Brahmined the Brahmins, refusing to consort or have social relations of any kind with the local populations. The French in their colonies, some have argued, displayed greater willingness to engage with the people that they colonized. The British in India, it has also been suggested, were comparatively mild-mannered, and one cliched observation that is unfailingly encountered in many comparative sweeps would have everyone believe that Mohandas ('Mahatma') Gandhi could flourish in India, but that in South Africa or Leopold's Congo he would have been ground to the dust. Indeed, one of the many idioms in which the great game of colonialism survives today is in those numerous discussions which seek to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' colonialisms.

However, then, one might describe the difference between the British in India, the French in Algeria and Indochina, the Dutch in Indonesia, the Spanish in the New World and Philippines, and the Americans in the Philippines, it is imperative to recognize that everywhere the colonizers sought to impose upon the colonized their worldview. Until relatively recent times, the history of conquest was written primarily as a record of military triumphs, the territorial expansion of European powers, the exploitation of the land and its natural resources – a history written through the categories derived from economics, politics, and the social sciences. Advocates of imperialism, or rather of the view that the actions of European powers were paved with good intentions, took the view that Europe energized and 'developed' societies that had become, in nearly every sense of the word, stagnant; critics of colonialism, on the other hand, embraced the view that Europe underdeveloped its colonies, and that far from being set on the road to 'development,' colonized people were stripped of their material, intellectual, and cultural resources.

Important as are these debates, they should not obscure the fundamental fact of colonialism and the post-colonial era: every conquest is a conquest of knowledge. The epistemological imperatives of the colonial state have only in the last few decades begun to receive the critical scrutiny of scholars and commentators. The British in India, to take one well-known example, devoted themselves to an exhaustive study of India's social and intellectual traditions: grammars of Indian languages were created, translations of scriptural texts were authorized, the legal texts of Hindus and Muslims were codified, the land was mapped and its inhabitants counted, measured, and classified; 'communities' were enumerated, marked, and named; and so on and so forth. The Botanical Survey, the Archaeological Survey, the Trigonometrical Survey, and such projects as the 'People of India' survey or the voluminous enterprise of creating imperial and district gazetteers were as much a part of the institutional framework of colonial rule as the various pieces of legislation and administrative decisions which gave rise to colonial police and armed forces, the courts and a judicial apparatus, mechanisms of governance, and other well-known institutions of colonial policy-making.

What is true of India is also, to a greater or lesser degree, characteristic of British, French, and Dutch colonies in other parts of the world. To many lay observers, the most transparent aspect of the 'conquest of knowledge' is elucidated through other facts, such as the inheritance of the English language, the continuing legacy of British parliamentary traditions, or even, as in the case of India, the peculiar circumstance that though India's constitution framers consulted a large number of constitutions, the essential features of the Indian constitution were ultimately derived from that very colonial piece of policy-making known as the Government of India Act of 1935.

The 'conquest of knowledge' entailed, however, a great deal more than what was wrought under colonial rule itself, and under conditions of globalization Western knowledge systems have sought, largely with success, to gain complete dominance across the globe in nearly all spheres of life. The economists' conceptions of growth, poverty, scarcity, and development, marketed by all the social sciences, have come

to predominate everywhere, and the sum total of Western social science has not only been to mire the so-called developing world in ever more acute levels of poverty, but to forestall the possibility of worldviews and life-styles that do not synchronize with the conception of the 'good life' that prevails in the 'developed' West. The entire theory of development, to pursue this one idea at somewhat greater length, is predicated on a time-lag: countries that are underdeveloped or part of the developing world seek to emulate the developed countries, but by the time they have seemingly caught up, the developed countries have gone well beyond to another plane of development. The native, to speak in a different tongue, always arrive late at the destination; indeed, the theory of development condemns the underdeveloped to live not their own lives, but rather to fulfill someone else's conception of life. Development doesn't merely assure us that the past of the native must be entirely jettisoned, but it also hijacks the native's future. If the native's present is the European's past, the native's future is the European's present.

In whatever domain of life one might care to look, the story is a similar one. American-style MBAs have become quite the rage everywhere in the South, as though successful businessmen are only a thing of the present. Generations of Gujarati businessmen ran a virtual thalassocracy over several centuries, and a Gujarati trader's credit was good enough thousands of miles away; and yet an American-style MBA is now the only proper credential for a businessman of repute. Even *Forbes* magazine has described the legendary tiffin lunch-box delivery system of Mumbai a business program with the least margin of error ever encountered in a business with tens of thousands of clients, but this fact has not been allowed to disturb the arrogant confidence of those who are habituated to thinking of corporate-style management with complex computer systems as the only way of conducting a modern business.

The Polynesians were able to navigate the oceans across large distances without a compass or other navigational tools, but modern knowledge systems have little use for such indigenous forms of knowledge. Modern science cannot countenance any critiques from outside its own framework,

since exponents of modern science take it as axiomatic that science is perforce modern; in other words, modern science does not allow for the notion of plurality of sciences. Thus, advocates of allopathic medicine feel perfectly entitled to critique homeopathy, acupuncture, or ayurveda, but they do not grant advocates of these other systems of medicine the same privilege. Indeed, modern Western science effortlessly describes all other scientific traditions as 'ethnoscience,' just as the oral histories of Aboriginals, Polynesian tribes, the Bushmen, Santals and numerous other communities become reduced to 'ethnohistories.' Strikingly, in universities across the United States, music departments are generally devoted to the study of the musical traditions of the West, from classical music down to American blues and jazz; the musical traditions from other parts of the globe are relegated to the 'ethnomusicology' department.

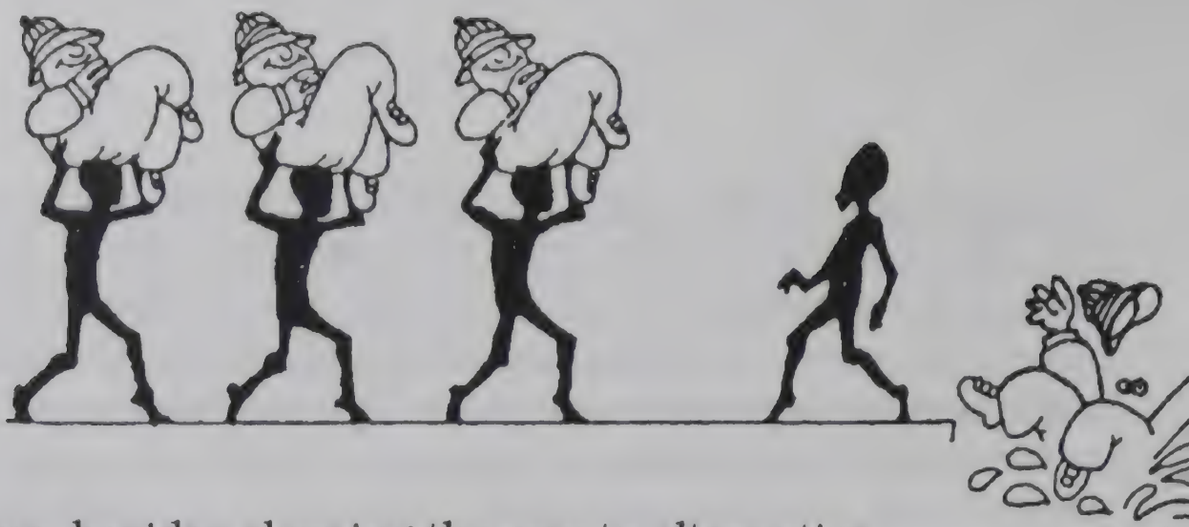
Nearly every academic discipline is similarly compromised. Multiversity, then, is faced with a daunting task. In all of the voluminous literature on globalization that has emerged in recent years, there is scarcely the recognition that what has been most effectively globalized are the knowledge systems of the West. Despite the pretensions of the social sciences, nowhere more on display than in the bankrupt disciplines of political science and economics, their methodologies and findings are far from being universal; indeed, considering the widening economic disparities in the US itself, and the nakedly criminal and self-aggrandizing policies of one American administration after another, one might say that economists and political scientists have contributed not a little towards wrecking their own home. If freedom is indivisible, it is important to recognize not only that the South has to free itself from that albatross around its neck that goes by the name of the 'West', but that the so-called developed countries have to be liberated from themselves.

In more concrete terms, scholars, academics, activists, and public intellectuals who are joined together in the Multiversity enterprise are committed to several propositions and courses of action. They are prepared to offer a wholesale but rigorous and searching critique of the framework of modern knowledge, more precisely of the academic disciplines, and of the epistemological, moral, and political

assumptions underlying these disciplines and the categories that they have generated. This perforce also entails a critique of schools and models of Western pedagogy, indeed of the entire culture of schooling which has become one of the fundamental dogmas of our times. The long history of colonization and neo-colonialism has not only led to the decimation, demise, and disappearance of diverse intellectual and cultural traditions, but has also eroded the self-confidence of people living under conditions of oppression and terror. Though we are loathe to state it in such terms, 'the West,' for all its known attractions, has also been a source of unmitigated terror to millions of people around the world. Still, since the West is not entirely monolithic either, the members of the Multiversity enterprise recognize that it is important to forge political and practical coalitions with those individuals who represent what might be called the other side of Europe – in other words, Europe's own dissenters, representatives of its marginalized, recessive, and subjugated traditions. Before it colonized the world, Europe colonized its own people.

In the years to come, Multiversity activities will, as has already been hinted, take diverse forms. Intellectual ties between the countries of the South must be strengthened. Long before India and China interacted with Europe, they interacted with each other; indeed, the Indian Ocean was a global world, a crossroads, but part of the effect of colonialism has been to obscure these earlier histories. When scholars engage in comparative history, that almost invariably entails the comparison of Europe to India, or Europe to China, or Europe to Africa, or Europe to Latin America; but seldom does comparative history take us to comparisons across the South. The conception of what constitutes the 'world' has narrowed so considerably that everywhere outside Europe it means a knowledge only of one's own country and of the Euro-American world. These, apparently, are the borders of our supposed cosmopolitanism.

Whether in anthropology, international law, or social theory, almost the entire body of knowledge is of Euro-American origins. These are not innocent enterprises, as the history of anthropology's bloody and shameless complicity with imperialism so amply demonstrates. Multiversity's advocates are keen on generating a set of accessible readers that furnish both a critical perspective on every academic



discipline, besides showing the way to alternative conceptions of these disciplines. Europe has long interpreted the world, but it is also time to recognize that Europe's own self-representation cannot be accepted. Whatever the hazards of interpreting the other, Africans, Indians, Malays and others must systematically engage in the study of Europe, the United States, and the remaining paraphernalia of the West – and they must do so not by way of merely reversing Orientalism, and creating a noxious Occidentalism, but by way of creating a body of knowledge about the West that would enable them to know both themselves and the West better than they have done so hitherto. There can be no intercultural dialogue or genuine exchange of ideas so long as the terms of the conversation are set exclusively by the West.

As a final note, it is necessary to add that the 'multi' in multiversity and multiworld ought to be distinguished from the 'multi' in multiculturalism. Having ruthlessly homogenized itself, the United States, the leader of the West, has now had to embrace 'multiculturalism', and relentlessly peddles its multiculturalism to the world as a sign of its openness and tolerance. Let us recall that in the Unites States, there is no field of inquiry designated as 'White Studies', though in fact that is another name for the large body of social knowledge produced by the West. Multiculturalism of the American variety, which is synonymous with consumer choice and white domination (sometimes appearing in the relatively more 'benign' form of *primus inter pares*), is now poised to become a template for societies where the ground reality has always been multicultural. Multiversity aims at resisting such insidious forms of resurgent colonialism.

5

Launching Multiversity

Claude Alvares

A few months ago, at the request of Haji Mohamed Idris, President of the Third World Network, I prepared a brief note on the need to overthrow the present day 'educational system' represented everywhere on the planet by the familiar structures of school and college. In most of our countries, it is considered normal (and even desirable) if children commencing from the time they are two and a half years old, up to the time they reach the age of 21 are kept for long periods of time every day within the walls of these institutions, under compulsion, and drilled to memorise things that are supposed to assist them when they become adults.

The note I prepared for Idris was hardly original: it reflected the feelings, anxieties, insights, convictions and conclusions of a fairly large group of scholars, teachers, intellectuals, humanists, educators, pupils and students, not just from Asia, Africa, Aotearoa and South America, but from the so-called high-income countries as well. Many of us felt we were being forced to spend the best part of our lives teaching or learning sterile, mostly borrowed material, bereft

of life, cut off from reality. Worse, we were mechanically engaged in these tasks within institutions that were expressly set up decades ago to destroy our creativity and our identity; to make us to doubt our innate abilities to deal with our environment, to question our inherent sense of worth and, finally, to discard reliance on indigenous intellectual traditions, knowledge systems or cosmologies.

The present day educational system was not only an imposition (requiring mandatory attendance and compliance at every stage), it demanded implicit allegiance to the homogenising values and objectives of State and Market. As such, it was a means of preparing the spirit of people to unquestioningly accept the presently entrenched model of development and globalisation even when the latter implied deeper entrapment and bondage. The educational system appeared to be nothing more than a vast recruitment ground for a project of continuous colonisation and westernisation that had commenced 500 years ago and was now being spread to even the remotest corners of the planet like a disease. Jamal-ud-din called it the 'plague of the West': the urge to condition all children and young people to accept and conform to a perception of human nature that was profoundly anti-nature, anthropocentric and individualistic to the point of being anti-social.

As a follow up to the note, Citizens International, a trust also headed by Idris, organised a meeting in Penang where the Multiversity Project was formally launched in February 2002 with one overt aim: to attempt to generate and support, in the place of the present 'educational system', better, superior, diverse and more effective learning opportunities that would stimulate, rather than suppress, the inherent creativity of human beings. If, during the processes unleashed by the Project, the influence of the present day ubiquitous education system is undermined, or if we are able to encourage large-scale or significant desertion from its ranks, so much the better for all the living species on this planet and also for the earth.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Actually, if one looks at it closely, the idea of the Multiversity ought to have come five decades ago, when many of our

countries achieved political independence. Either our leaders and intellectuals then were unprepared for the opportunity presented by the departure of those who had designed the colonial education systems, or they were affected by a massive failure of nerve. Many, perhaps, did not even recognise the opportunity when it dropped in their laps, despite the fact that there were people in their midst who made strong vocal representation against the inherited, colonial system of schooling. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, railed against it on several occasions and went on to create an independent, parallel system of education which he called *nai talim* or 'basic education'. Rabindranath Tagore, India's first Nobel Laureate, went to the extent of establishing a brand new centre of learning called Santiniketan as a counter to existing colleges and universities.

It must have appeared obvious to many political leaders except those completely besotted with the institutions of the West that there was something profoundly disagreeable and wrong with the colonially-inspired system of developing the intellects of citizens. After all, the colonial structure of governance and the educational policies associated with it had been fabricated for meeting a set of political objectives that were, if seen against the background of the new Constitutions adopted after lengthy debates in Asia or Africa, invalid and unacceptable. The entire educational system, not just in India but elsewhere as well, was erected on the basis of assumptions that were not only an insult to the people living in these countries, but to their intellectual and spiritual traditions as well.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, a fairly good representative of the colonial educator, laid down the assumptions behind the new system of education the English introduced in India in a note he wrote in 1835. It was based on the following clear-cut convictions that he had derived from his colossal ignorance of India's intellectual traditions:

- Whatever Indian society had produced in 5000 years was rubbish and had to be wholly discarded;
- Indians should be de-linked from their traditions for these reasons;
- The English system should be introduced on a wide scale, in order to create a class of middlemen who would

mediate between the rulers and ruled and thereby obediently assist in the exercise of imperial power.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has done a remarkable analysis of similar assumptions underlying the installation of 'modern education' in Africa in his book, *Decolonising the Mind.*

People in the know thus recognised that the colonial system of education had really nothing to do with 'education' as such, but had been specifically designed, in form and content, to create a class of human beings, who would be devoted to their masters and who would enable their rulers to exercise power and dominion over people of colour. Education was also based on the conviction that those certified would not be able to function or perform better, unless they were de-linked from their own experience, their own traditions, their own histories and myths, and their own ability to think freely.

To think that such a system of learning installed and enforced by a colonial government demanding obsequiousness and obedience, would be continued, supported and expanded by a free government after independence is something we find today difficult to understand. After decades of struggling for freedom from foreign servitude, it appears that the 'freedom fighters' only had sufficient courage left to doggedly and uncritically pursue the educational project they had inherited from their erstwhile masters. Getting rid of the colonial educational system, essentially designed to benefit the colonisers, seemed more difficult than getting rid of the colonisers. Or perhaps the new rulers thought that since it had helped the colonisers to control and rule, it would enable them to do so as well.

There was of course one section of the ruling elite that had already been completely brainwashed and indoctrinated in the superiority of English institutions and of the necessity to expand the influence of bourgeois civil society in India. It appeared to them that schooling had become a tradition in itself, an institution as sacred as our temples, worthy of worship. They shared dreams of industrial power and were convinced that modern education of the British (and later, American) kind was fundamental to the construction of a military-industrial society, developed outwardly as an frank imitation of advanced countries with their technology. This

educated group was deeply convinced that commitment to education of the kind they had received was essential to progress.

Nonetheless, it is incredible that our educators simply and uncritically adopted the colonial system. They poured money, time, talent into it. They allowed (even encouraged) the slaughter of the innocents, millions of them. They abused the young charges assigned to them, emptied them of content and identity, and stripped them naked, prior to filling their heads with what they felt was new knowledge, all of it imported of course, but the assumptions and contents of which they themselves had rarely examined. Those very assumptions have today placed the planet and its communities at the very brink of survival.

It is therefore not surprising that what passes off as an 'educational system' today and its higher culmination, the college and university setup has become a cruel trap in which millions of people, most below the age of 20, unwittingly find themselves. While all educators gallantly promise in their grand theories that education is designed to make people free, the institutions to which people have been sent to learn are prisons and boring reform houses, from which many normal human beings flee or drop out at the earliest possible opportunity. Invariably, only those who are ready to deny the existence of their own brains or who profess total allegiance to the values inculcated by the state-controlled schooling system are passed off as 'successes' even though they remain, for the rest of their lives, on some kind of parole and, nowadays, in constant need of 're-training.'

The political objectives, true, have changed. If the system originally set out to implement the imperial powers' aspira-

While all educators gallantly promise in their grand theories that education is designed to make people free, the institutions to which people have been sent to learn are prisons and boring reform houses, from which many normal human beings flee or drop out at the earliest possible opportunity.

tions for control, it has now become a vehicle for the specific political ideology of individual national governments everywhere, in turn subject to the influence of corporations who need a constant supply of unthinking serfs for their business lines.

Today, with the downward pressure of globalisation and WTO regimes breathing down our backs, the education system is getting even more skewed in the direction of investing the resources of societies to produce workers for the global mega-production machine. The more young people are sucked into it, the more the prospect of challenging the present model of development or the globalisation of the economy recedes. We cannot fight the globalisation process, without also dismantling the education system, in which the 'global consumer' mentality is created and nurtured. Thus, the Multiversity is an idea whose time has come. It can openly assist in the worldwide war to cook the globalisation devil.

Let us now take a frank and unvarnished look at what schools and colleges accomplish in almost all parts of our world.

Schools Can Only Generate Zombies

Every year we find the exercise of mental torment dutifully and mindlessly repeated in thousands of institutions all over the world, from the USA to the Philippines. Whether rich country or poor, advanced or backward, it doesn't make any difference. Indeed, the scale of the regimentation is worse in countries like the UK and the USA, where almost every aspect of what is taught and how it is taught is under centralised state control. Paradoxically, the children of the

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middle and upper classes suffer the regimentation the most, while the children of the poor at least have the choice of dropping out and retaining their common sense.

The universal and unquestioned allegiance to this enterprise is simply astonishing, if one peeks behind the curtains to find out what is really going on. This is, in effect, the largest exercise in stultification being carried out in human history. Its sole intent appears to be to demoralise human beings, by convincing them of their need for almost life-long tutoring by persons, who themselves succumbed to being tutored under similar compulsions earlier. But the vast enterprise also has other undisclosed objectives. It blandly undermines the pupil's grasp of reality, cuts off her links with the natural world, successfully incubates within the victim a wholesale contempt for the history of her own people, their traditions or ways of being. It takes diverse, bright and beautiful inquisitive children and turns them into tentative, hesitant, timid and dull individuals by the time they reach puberty, continuously in need of re-training and additional training so that they can continue in service of the global, consumer-oriented, profit-inspired, mega-machine.

As Idris noted in his inaugural speech at the launch of Multiversity:

'The creative energy of children and youth, from the age of three or five till they reach the early twenties the best and most impressionable part of their lives is first frozen and abused by suppression and wholesale discounting, then encouraged to atrophy by default, until it appears to disappear completely from their normal life.'

From Mahatma Gandhi to Rabindranath Tagore, Ivan Illich and Jiddu Krishnamurti, the critique of schooling has established that it is a fatal institution for normal people everywhere, because it does not educate, but actually cripples. Further, there is acknowledgement of the following facts regarding the impact of schooling:

Schooling destroys creativity in fundamental ways, by constantly reinforcing the unwarranted ideas that those who do not attend it are inferior. It promotes the notion that all people are born either empty or with rudimentary ideas and must therefore go through the grind of being finished or polished or certified. Above all, it promotes the conviction

that only that knowledge imparted in the school is knowledge and all else may be interesting, but is not valid. Reality, in fact, is to be discarded if it conflicts with what is provided for in the text. This set of assumptions is rigorously drilled into young people seeking education both in the North and the South.

In fact, schools today have no need for creativity. They do not either recognise or encourage it. In places where it is recognised, it still remains tightly controlled. Those in charge of education systems have decided that children only need to memorize pre-digested answers, prepared by faceless textbook writers, working in centralised educational institutions in order to be deemed 'educated'. In examinations, the answer which most closely resembles the originally decided 'correct response' will receive the highest marks. On the other hand, a creative answer which differs from the standard/accepted response is almost certain to be marked wrong. The brain-banging exercise is conducted fairly ruthlessly. What is more, it has the sanction of parents, ruling institutions, the State and most intellectuals and the corporate class. Eventually, it earns the sanction of the victim too.

The compulsory nature of schooling now given legal sanction by draconian education Acts that promise to punish parents that do not send their wards to school is seen as the only option available to welfare States to force people to take up opportunities that will enable them to come up in life and to be seen as equals of more privileged folk. Any move to criticise schooling is then perceived as an elitist manoeuvre to block the mobility of the poor.

However, experience of the schooling system in all countries has shown that it has more often than not helped *maintain* and *reinforce* inequality, rather than eliminate it. Aside from the obvious fact that rich people attend elite or public schools, and poorer folk go to poor schools from which they eventually opt out, 'quality education' available to the rich actually creates an additional layer of inequality to those layers created by other social devices.

Ultimately, even the so-called 'alternative' schools, which claim to protect and enhance the creativity of those who come to their portals, promote the same myths and work under the same assumptions. This is because they indicate

The second major problem that people in the former colonised countries exclusively face is that the content of education contains largely negative perceptions of our local and national histories, cultures, languages and religions.

that the only problem with schooling may be mediocre educational methods, and that if their methods are introduced in conventional schools, the latter would become 'creative' as well. Yet, the 'products' of alternative schools are also scheduled to enter the market, maybe at a more advantaged point than those coming from normal schools.

The second major problem that people in the former colonised countries exclusively face is that the content of education contains largely negative perceptions of our local and national histories, cultures, languages and religions. This is a direct consequence of the success of attitudes represented so well by people like T. B. Macaulay. In this context, European ideas are considered the only basis for a proper schooling programme and for 'civilized' living. History textbooks in India, for example, still unabashedly hail the arrival of Vasco-da-Gama as a great event. Or repeat themes proposed by English historians like James Mill or even Karl Marx. Incorporating the intellectual corpus of Indian or other civilisations into the materials prepared for courses still provokes resistance from some quarters. Earlier it provoked penalties and punishments.

By far the most pernicious of these perceptions has been the idea that there was no learning or valid knowledge generated prior to the arrival of the British, a myth now corrected with the work of the Indian historian, Dharampal. On the contrary, just as vaccination from England wiped out the indigenous Indian system of inoculation against small pox, the imported idea of the school wiped out existing indigenous learning places and processes. These were undoubtedly very different from modern European model schools in their purpose, the control they exercised, their diversity of pedagogical practices.

Higher Education, Advanced Stultification

For the past couple of centuries, as with the school, the institution of the university too, has been replicated *ad nauseam* in every nook and corner of the globe. This has been done with the noble intent of spreading a uniform perception of Nature (based on modern science) and therefore a similar method of research and training across the world. The widespread assumption of the universality of modern science and by association naturally the superiority of other aspects and products of Western culture, provided legitimacy for this action. Replication of the college and university system was made possible due to the dominant position of Europe in the colonial world. As power defined knowledge, the process was easily facilitated.

The intellectual centres are located in the West, and they supply the categories and terms of the debate. We play along. They remain the centre, while we keep ourselves at the periphery. They create; we copy and apply. We do not challenge the underlying assumptions. We blandly copy because these disciplines are apparently tested and firm, a well-recognised body of knowledge. Replication is safer than attempting something different.

In such a situation, studies and research are considered best if done within a framework of western institutions. We have no felt need to go beyond the settled disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, etc. Yet, these 'sciences' only retain value within the precincts of the academic world. Even within this world, there is hardly any true belief in their premises or assumptions. We must remember that the perceived validity of such knowledge rarely goes beyond the boundaries of universities.

Today, we may see it as absurd, that one culture has become the norm for all others, to the extent that diverse majorities around the globe would seek to destroy their own identities and selves in the misguided drive to imitate or replicate the main features of the dominating culture. But this belief in homogenization has remained the basis of development theory for the past five decades, and it still retains influence. No wonder the World Bank, a coterie of bankers, also dabbles in education and now routinely produces books on what it believes are sound global educational policies.

University education was also thought by some to be a benign project, designed to impart a 'liberal education.' Again, the content of that education was supplied in the form of printed texts wholly imported from the so-called developed countries, and rarely related to experience in our own societies. None of the courses taught had anything to do with what we call *shiksha*. They were largely in the form of some capsules that had to be taken for purposes of certification. The ultimate purpose of the mind-destroying exercise was not freedom but certification.

The university, as we know it today, is dead. From its early origins several centuries ago, as a respected, feared and autonomous site, which hosted a community of scholars and students who met to discuss specific issues, it has now almost wholly surrendered itself to the supremacy of texts and all that this implies, particularly the tyrannies associated with the various hierarchies of interpretation that such texts require. Scholarship has degenerated into a skill of text recognition, text replication, and a display of the names of the manufacturers of key texts. (Quoting Derrida, I hear, is the latest intellectual fashion: I thought he was a Spanish bullfighter.) Less and less associated with learning and instead increasingly concerned with the supply of newer recruits to function as cogs in the global economy led by giant multinational corporations, the university has become today a text-crunching machine, almost wholly alienated from the real world and sterile. Both the pursuit of knowledge and research agendas are openly dictated by MNCs.

From school to university, the entire exercise appears to be single-purpose: kill the mind, generate obedient serfs,

Less and less associated with learning and instead increasingly concerned with the supply of newer recruits to function as cogs in the global economy led by giant multinational corporations, the university has become today a text-crunching machine, almost wholly alienated from the real world and sterile. Both the pursuit of knowledge and research agendas are openly dictated by MNCs.

feed the market. The entire exercise of homogenizing human beings to compulsorily read approved texts so that they are able to assist the designs of first, colonial powers, and now, hegemonic corporations needs to have its back broken.

The crisis in the system, caused by the production of thousands of 'paper' graduates, has driven young people to seek additional certification, in order to bring down the numbers against whom they may have to compete. So one goes for an MBA or other additional courses (diplomas in computer science are also a rage), or pays extravagant sums for branded or 'quality education', to enable one to stand out of the crowd (or the mob) for the few places available as high quality employment (which, the world over, remains as insecure as low quality employment).

The situation is actually worse in the so-called high income countries, where 'education' is in a state of structural crisis. People had been transferred from agriculture to industry (primary to secondary) and then from industry to service (secondary to tertiary). With the takeover of service industries by automation, there are simply no further transfers possible. Key institutions are unable to figure out what kind of 're-training' can be done to shift people from tertiary industries, when there is no new sector beckoning on the horizon. IT and biotechnology are now being seen as the latest saviours. The IT industry has already undergone a melt-down, taking with it a considerable part of e-commerce and the 'new economy'. Biotechnology is embedded in serious controversy across the planet.

In countries like India, where 'education' has been seen almost exclusively as a means to employment, the rapid capitalization of imported technology and increasing automation in industry has led to a stagnant and now declining workforce around 25 million in India for the past five decades. It is also in its own structural crisis, as there is a gross misfit between what is being churned out of schools, colleges and universities and the requirements of prized, high quality global employment. The system is now facing a cul-de-sac.

The scale of the injustice facing young people is simply mind-boggling: millions must submit to the tyranny of performing well at memory tasks, so that the best of these can be chosen for further training. This leaves the majority,

who have unable to get high marks, as 'failures'. A system of education, which practically dismisses the bulk of its young people as failures, should have been banned long ago.

This circus has gone on for more than 150 years. The Multiversity project has been initiated to put a full stop to it now. At the Multiversity inaugural meeting, Yusef Progler, a critical thinker in education based in the Arab world, told us that the western educational system, far from being competent to guide the rest of the world, is itself in a profound state of crisis. It is unable to figure out the new direction in which it should go. Therefore, it is as good a time as any, to strike out in fresh directions on our own. There are no teachers available to guide us in which direction we must move. We must be our own teachers.

If we agree that this is the challenge facing us, we can set out to propose a rival set of assumptions which would better reflect what we are, where we live and also take account of our intellectual histories. We may or may not take a critical stand on various aspects of such histories, but it cannot be our position that all of them are absurd, humanly unacceptable, predated, irrational, invalid or unscientific.

Before this statement is even remotely confused with the political claims of groups like those, for instance, promoting Hindutva in India, it is important to clarify that the violence, intolerance and regimentation associated with such forces is similar to the violence associated with conventional schools. The drive to indoctrinate is a cardinal feature of both.

If we distinguish Multiversity's aims and objectives from the aims of such groups, so must we distinguish it from post-modern discourse as well, the latest intellectual import from Europe. Multiversity must have, of necessity, a strong agenda in relation the task of decolonising the mind, decolonising knowledge and asserting our complete intellectual independence. Without this focus, its work will never be complete or will have little credibility. Even after a trial of more than a hundred years, Western modes of perception have proved incapable of being drafted or accepted as a truly universal way of understanding nature or interacting with it. They are in fact, helping to raise entire generations of people who think that killing all life on the planet is a matter of unconcern.

Working Principles of Multiversity

The Multiversity we envision, and seek to establish by our collective action, is in complete contrast to the educational system as we know it. It shall be constructed with the support of a wide network and community of independent, free-thinking educators and learners from Asia, Africa, Aotearoa, and South America. The idea of a Multiversity is based on the firm reality of diverse universes of perception, separate cosmologies, and distinct existing bodies of valid knowledge.

Multiversity will structure itself to function in ways that will be the opposite of those associated with the conventional school and university. We will tolerate no bureaucratic hierarchies. Nor do we envision centralised top-to-bottom directions. Multiversity will not conduct itself through any of the practices associated with or used by the present educational system. Its working principles are enumerated below:

- Orienting learning once again towards life; making it open-ended and creative;
- Separating learning from job training; or distinguishing between learning through work and learning to fit into a job, like a cog in a wheel.
- Multiversity will use non-print media in a substantial manner. Knowledge generated in the form of videos, music, theatre, artwork, and other media will be listed, supported and circulated to break the monopoly of the printed text book as the sole repository of learning re sources and as the primary means for dialogue. Multiversity will eschew exclusive dependence on analytical modes of learning, and exploit affective modes equally;
- Multiversity will conduct its activities largely in the local languages of the various communities of the South. All documents relating to the Multiversity will be available in the major languages of the South including Chinese, Hindi, Swahili, etc.
- Multiversity's learning programmes will be rooted in mutual respect between teachers and learners; this would involve breaking the rigid division between teachers and learners;
- It will avoid exclusive dependence on texts and memoris-

ing of such texts;
- It will refuse to certify learning experiences;
- It will refuse to evaluate through examinations;
- By definition, funding will not be accepted from corporate groups. Financial support will be accepted only from those, by and large, sympathetic to Multiversity's ideals.

Above all, Multiversity will display an absolute commitment to protecting the integrity of every individual's life, so that each one of us is in a position to make real choices and not compelled to reduce his or her life to complete and absolute bondage to an economic system or method of production.

Core Activities

Multiversity activities are being planned under separate country chapters e.g., Multiversity-India, Multiversity-Malaysia etc. Though these country-specific chapters will be independent of each other and led by their own advisory councils and core groups, they will share in the objectives of Multiversity as agreed upon, if they wish to use the Multiversity label. Each will plan their own activities and share these with the other chapters.

Within each country chapter, the following broad classes of actions will have to be proposed and taken up:

- Those designed for learners totally *outside* the school and higher education frameworks.
- Those designed for learners attending school but *outside* their school curriculum framework.
- Those designed for learners attending college/university but *outside* their college/university framework.
- Those designed for learners *within* their school curriculum framework.
- Those designed for learners *within* their college/university framework.

With regard to schools:

Work in this regard has already commenced with identification of a large number of learning centres already being conducted in different areas outside the framework of 'factory schooling'. One immediate goal is the production of an *Alternative Education Sourcebook*, which documents

home-schooling experiences and alternative schools (learning centres). The Sourcebook will not only include detailed stories of all experimental, open learning centres, which have emerged as an alternative to the formal schooling system, it will also provide details of other resources, including: lists of educators, discussions on alternatives to school and college, successful learning programmes that eschew certification and fees, etc.

Multiversity will function as a global clearinghouse for the exchange of information that will assist the further decline of schools and formal learning and certifying institutions. It will carry on the publishing of books and journals and video films that will assault the school is effective ways (a task that is not difficult by any length of the imagination).

Multiversity will ensure that good practices are circulated in a well-organised and systematic way for enhanced use across the planet, particularly among educators and parents, to create a groundswell against the benefits of schooling.

Multiversity will prepare special programmes for parents, as in large parts of the world, they remain the principal agents responsible for demanding ever more educational burdens for their wards.

With regard to higher educational institutions:

Hitherto, the knowledge we had created, or which we create everyday, was suppressed or was simply ignored because it did not fit within the dominant paradigms in circulation. The present day output of books that wields influence in the knowledge system being disseminated is noted by the absence of any works generated by people in the South. So one of Multiversity's first tasks is the airing and sharing of suppressed knowledge. To achieve this, Multiversity has already initiated the following projects:

- A library of 500 of the most influential books written by scholars, thinkers, philosophers, educators from Asia, Africa and South America. The list is to be circulated to all the universities in our realms, while their texts would be available if not in print, at least through CDs. These titles would include, for example, Sardar Panikkar's *Asia and Western Dominance*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind*; M.K. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*;

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*; Ashis Nandy's *Intimate Enemy*; Edward Said's *Orientalism*; Rana Kabbani's *Europe's Myths of Orient*; Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive*; J.P.S. Uberoi's, *Science and Culture.* Though the sample list provided above is dominated by titles written originally in English, the final list is bound to show a predominance of works produced in vernacular languages.

- An annotated bibliography of up to 10,000 articles organised under various disciplines and which demonstrate creative work, new ideas, methodologies equal to or superior to what we have learned from the intellectual institutions of the Western world.
- A catalogue of journals from Africa, Aotearoa, Asia and South America, so that we can know how we are thinking in our circles, and to support others in the direction of Multiversity and its values.
- An annual publication or Yearbook devoted to the best essays and intellectual output originating exclusively from the South.
- The commissioning of critiques of existing knowledge disciplines like sociology, economics, psychology, history, anthropology, etc.

Affiliation to Multiversity

The criteria for membership in the Multiversity Project will be the display of an independent mind, the ability to stand alone in a community of intellectuals or educators, and the courage to speak one's mind, without being hemmed in by intellectual fashions, name-dropping, or government restrictions on jobs. We expect affiliation with Multiversity to begin with a community of 500 active educators from Africa, Asia and South America, who shall subscribe to a commitment not to submit to intellectual domination from the high income countries. They shall boldly eschew the conventional habit of wanting to show off to their acquaintances their latest intellectual work emanating from the West or the latest additions of Western literature to their personal libraries.

We then hope various groups will *affiliate* themselves with the Multiversity process in each country. Teachers associated Multiversity will include those with and without

degrees; those with only knowledge of books and those without, including potters, carpenters, farmers, electricians, etc. These will become the core expertise of the learning programmes of Multiversity. They will be joined by Multiversity *supporters* of all ages, who will themselves participate in Multiversity programmes for learning experiences and eschew dependence on schools whenever and wherever possible. *Parents of children* will hopefully become members of the Multiversity network *en masse*, especially when they are convinced that it will enable them to protect their children's and their own personalities and unique identities. These various individuals and groups will link through networks on each continent and among them.

Multiversity will connect with local, national and international social movements which have as their primary aim the complete overthrow of the present unjust economic system, represented today in the globalisation project installed under the WTO regime and the several institutions that are godfathers to the project. It will work with such movements to analyse their weaknesses, especially those weaknesses that can be sourced to their reliance on colonized knowledge, tools and frameworks. Every step to strengthen these movements along these lines will be a strengthening of Multiversity processes as well.

We will further work to increase affiliation through various other means. For example, we have designed a webpage that, for the first ten years, will only feature work, and recognition of work, done in Asia, Africa, Aotearoa or South America.

In its initial phase, Multiversity will eschew dependence on intellectual sources that emanate from the West. For 500 years, the South has been largely excluded from the concerns of the high-income societies. A little reverse exclusion will not harm at this stage. We need to take a break or to delink in order to examine assumptions, and to review and rethink what constitutes knowledge. If we do not exclude the West from the purview of this activity at this preliminary stage, conventional dominance will take over and we will once again be reduced to parroting ideas originating in other contexts having no connection with ours. Multiversity is an initiative from the South. It will remain a creative institution

largely within the South. Individuals and organisations may affiliate themselves to the project at some stage, but the overall direction of the project will always remain within the South.

Multiversity, in its initial phase, must become a vast network and clearing house for the societies of the South, enabling them to resist Western cultural dominance, language, homogenisation at all levels. Only after it had found its feet, will it opt to discuss the globalisation project and its handmaiden modern knowledge with groups and individuals working on similar concerns located within the North.

At a later date, collaborative programmes with select conventional schools and universities, interested in operating along the lines of Multiversity thinking, may also increase membership in the process. Of course, the Advisory Council is expected to eventually initiate negotiations with important conventional educational institutions and centres, to seek to introduce fundamental changes in methods and content which will further true personal freedom while meeting the ends of survival and local economy. Many individuals within these institutions are themselves already acutely aware of the steady degradation of the educational system at all levels and of its inability to equip ordinary citizens with the means with which they can deal intelligently with the modern world. They will look more and more to the Multiversity process for both vision and practical solutions in the years ahead.

At present, the headquarters of the Multiversity are based in Penang, Malaysia. The project will shortly have a Council of Elders, comprising eminent men and women chosen from the societies of the South. Routine administration of the project is in the hands of an Advisory Council, comprising members of Citizens International and serious educators from the different countries of the South, beginning first with Asia and Aotearoa, then Africa and finally, South America. Apart from this basic structure, Multiversity will take on the shape perhaps of a woven hammock changing readily to accommodate the requirements of its users, as hundreds and thousands of learning sites escape irrevocably from Macaulay's walled prisons across the globe.

6

Multiversity in Action

Multiversity Newsletter: KAMIRIITHU

The newsletter of the Multiversity Project is called *Kamiriithu*. It appears occasionally and is edited by Claude Alvares. The newsletter has two sections. The first one deals with critiques of existing university curricula and syllabuses used in almost all countries in Asia, Africa and South America and which are often little more than weak carbon copies of academic studies carried out in Western academic universities.

The second section of *Kamiriithu* is devoted to comments and discussions about alternatives to schooling systems introduced by colonial masters during the colonial periods in Asia, Africa and South America which are still being used and extended by post-colonial governments with very little changes either in content or pedagogy.

Three issues of the newspaper have already been published and copies can be downloaded from the website (www.multiworld.org). Subscription rate is nominal.

Multiversitylibrary.com

Multiversity proposes to scan approximately 500 titles of scholars, writers and thinkers exclusively from the countries in Asia, Africa and South America in order to provide a unique library which is also being posted on the internet under www.multiversitylibrary.com. The electronic versions of these books are not for commercial use and the exercise is being done solely to publicise these works among a larger audience and to increase access to them since they are not easily available. Many of them are only available in the publishing houses of the Western countries. There is no availability across the three continents of Asia, Africa aouth d S.America. The list of books being scanned and posted on the Internet (www.multiversitylibrary.com) is given below. (The books are also available on one CD at nominal cost.)

1. A. Adu Bohen, *African Perspective on Colonialism*
2. Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*
3. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*
4. Chakravarthi Raghavan, *Recolonisation*
5. Chaturvedi Badrinath, *Dharma, India and World Order*
6. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
7. Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*
8. Claude Alvares, *Decolonising History*
9. Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*
10. D.L.O. Mendis, *Eppawala: Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Race of Development*
11. Davison Buddho, *Enough is Enough*
12. Dharampal, *Collected Writings (5 vols)*
17. Edward Said, *Orientalism*
18. Gustavo Esteva and Suri Prakash, *Grassroots Post Modernism*
19. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*
20. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*
21. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity*
22. J.P.S Uberoi, *Science and Culture*
23. Just World Trust, *Dominance of the West Versus the Rest*
24. Just World Trust, *Human Wrongs*
25. K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*

26. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*
27. Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One Straw Revolution*
28. Mohammad Kattami, *Islam Liberty and Development*
29. Nandini Joshi, *Development without Destruction*
30. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*
31. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center*
32. Nsekuye Bizimana, *White Paradise, Hell for Africa?*
33. Orlando Albornoz, *Sociology & the Third World Perspective*
34. Orlando Fals Borda, *Knowledge and People's Power*
35. Rana Kabbani, *Devise & Rule: Europe's Myths of Orient*
36. Renato Constantino, *Synthetic Culture and Development*
37. Roberto Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*
38. Semakula Kiwanuka, *From Colonialism to Independence*
39. Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire*
40. Sunil Sahasrabudhey, *Gandhi's Challenge to Modern Science*
41. V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*
42. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive*
43. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*
44. Winin Pereira, *Inhuman Rights*
45. Winin Pereira, *Global Parasites*
46. Winin Pereira, *Asking the Earth*
47. Ziauddin Sardar, editor, *The Touch of Midas*
48. Ziauddin Sardar, *The Revenge of Athena*
49. Ziauddin Sardar, *Arguments for Islamic Science*
50. Ziauddin Sardar, How We Know

Conferences

Multiversity is proposing to have two conferences in 2004-2005.

The first conference is on the redesign of social science curricula. This group will meet in Penang and will discuss ways and means to indigenize academic curricula and to discuss their conception and pedagogical independence from 'white studies'.

The second conference is in respect of transforming the Indian education system. Participants will include government officials, persons from the teaching associations, parents, etc. The dates of the conference will be finalised

only after publication of the *Alternative Education Sourcebook*.

The Alternative Education Sourcebook

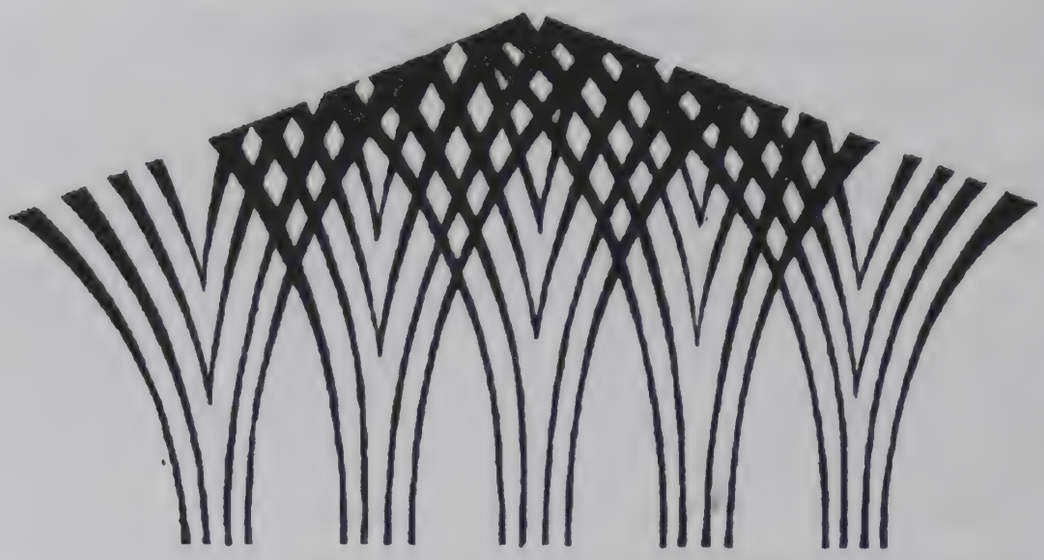
Taleemnet deals with issues relating to compulsory schooling, home schooling, unschooling, etc. At the moment, Taleemnet staff are busy with the preparation of the *Alternative Education Sourcebook* which is being designed to function as a major resource for those who intend to get out of the pedagogical/ colonial systems of education. This ambitious sourcebook is expected to be out by April 2005. At present, extensive documentation and visits are being carried out of a wide range of free schools and alternative schools within the Indian continent.

Transforming Social Science Teaching

One of the main objectives for which Multiversity was set up was to bring together creative intellectual talent from universities within Asia, Africa and South America to work for a common effort to transform the content of social science education in higher educational institutions. It is a well accepted fact that almost all universities within the global south rely upon curricula and even sometimes syllabi that—at some stage or other—have been copied from Western universities ('white studies', if we are to use the phrase coined by Ward Churchill). There are a few details of academic courses or even a few papers that may be different here and there, but by and large the principal body of thought has been imported, like a second hand car, from Western universities.

For example, in the field of sociology, though some concessions may be made to local realities or data, discussion of the principal concepts, thinkers, histories has remained largely within the catchment of the Western intellectual tradition. Thus sociology all over the world is more or less the same in its fundamentals because the experience utilised for the its construction has been narrowly taken from the societies of the West, ignoring most others.

Similar arguments could be made about other disciplines including political science, psychology, anthropology, economics, history, etc.



In psychology, for example, almost all scientific concepts taught in our universities originate from within the Western psychological tradition despite the fact that in countries like India, Tibet or China, for example, there is a vast corpus of extremely valid and useful psychological information available for study and use. Almost nothing of the latter is to be found in any of the psychology textbooks. There are no details about indigenous psycho-therapies though these are available in plenty, have been validated by experience and still direct the allegiance of millions across the world. In political science, no effort is made to deal with effective indigenous political science doctrines, texts, histories or concepts.

Partly this situation is a result of a continuing colonial mentality which uncritically assumes that since the social sciences were allegedly born in Europe, we have no option but to imbibe the Western social science tradition when we teach sociology or other social sciences in our universities.

However, this situation is changing and many professors and lecturers are questioning the need to continue to do this and are getting convinced that it is possible to create social science traditions for teaching at universities which are based on indigenous sciences and which may not even have a reference to the Western social science tradition (or other Western academic traditions) except perhaps as footnotes.

To further this perception, Multiversity has now set up a Working Group on Social Sciences. The primary focus of this group is to redefine the scope, content and even methodology of social sciences and to sever – wherever possible – inher-

ited vestiges and unnecessary links with the social science traditions that have emerged within the Western world and Western universities. The group will also consider how to inject indigenous theoretical inputs into the body of our social science teaching.

The group has first decided to carry out a comparative study of curricula of social science teaching and specific syllabi from various universities in India, Malaysia, Africa, the U.S. Coordinating this project at the moment is Vishram Gupte who is in the process of collecting curriculum details, syllabuses etc and analysing them in detail. His insights will then be placed before the Working Group for discussion.

Thereafter the Working Group is expected to put together a detailed critique of these various curricula and to come up with suggestions for alternative curricula which will reflect indigenous thinking, indigenous thinkers and writers and also assemble the necessary literature for constructing the syllabi that will eventually match the curricula.

The project of the Working Group is expected to take at least one year before it produces extremely concrete and practical results. It is expected that the papers resulting from the discussions will emerge in the form of booklets for widespread distribution and debate.

To locate these discussions within a specific frame of action, Multiversity organised two meetings in India. The first meeting was held in Trichy in October 2003 with interested persons from the autonomous colleges of Trichy and a few from outside the area as well. Another meeting was held the same month with interested persons from the University of Kerala. This was done with the support of the then Vice Chancellor, Dr. B. Iqbal and his associates.

The Kerala University, in fact, has already sent to Multiversity records of discussions carried out by the Kerala teachers, university lecturers and related groups on the changes required to be made in the curricula of educational institutions.

Individuals who are willing to join in this work may write to Multiversity. They should provide some idea of their area of interest. They may also give us an idea of any concrete manner in which they can contribute to this effort to rid universities of Eurocentric biases.

Learning Centres

The Multiversity is currently also engaged in preparing a general module for non-academic learning centres. These learning centres will utilise the services of trained persons who may have free time or who have already retired and are willing to share their skills with school dropouts and others who may not have had an opportunity to attend formal educational institutions.

The first course in this connection was conducted in Goa, India. (See box on *Framing Knowledge*).

Campaign Against Compulsory Schooling

The Indian government has recently come out with a bill to penalise all those parents who do not send their children to colonial schools. A critique has already been carried out of the bill. Both bill and the critique are being circulated to all groups dealing with education in India so that some draconian aspects of the present bill can still be modified.

The Dictionary Project

Vinay Lal, an Indian historian at the present moment located within the US, has commenced work with Multiversity associates on the preparation of a dictionary which will explain key words in circulation in normal discourse, with details of their political meanings.

Lal has welcomed universal participation in the project and he can be contacted at: vlal@history.ucla.edu. For more details, check the multiworld.org site, where sample entries are provided.

The Natural Farming Institute

One of the initiatives of the Multiversity projects concerns agriculture and alternatives to conventional agriculture based on chemicals and pesticides. For this Multiversity is setting up a Natural Farming Institute which will focus on problems faced by organic farmers in respect of education requirements. These include: (1) Special curricula for children of organic farmers so that they can homeschool instead of sending their children to colonial schools where they lose all connection or interest in farming activities. (2) The project is also working on training programmes and

resource materials for conducting courses for farmers who wish to convert from chemicals to organics.

Publications

The following publications have emerged from the Multiversity project:

- **Redefining Education**
  By Ivan Illich (Rs.30, US$3)
- **Enlightened thinkers and the revolutionary society**
  By Ali Shariati (Rs.30, US$3)
- **War on Iraq: Conceived in Israel.**
  By Stephen Sniegoski (Rs.30, US$3)
- **Digital Diploma Mills**
  By David Noble (Rs.30, US$3)
- **White Studies**
  By Ward Churchill (Rs.30, US$3)
- **USA: The Crumbling of Empire**
  By Frederik F Clairmont (Rs.30, US$3)
- **A Basic Call to Consciousness**
  By John Mohawk (Rs.30, US$3)
- **Iraq the Torments of Empire**
  By Frederic F. Clairmont (Rs.30, US$3)

Citizens International, Malaysia, has brought out all these booklets which look at the world and its major problems through non-Western eyes and brains.

These booklets are part of the 'Radical Essentials Pamphlet Series', edited by Yosef Progler. The series in intended to bring readers a collection of essays necessary for envisioning life beyond the hegemonic grip of Western modernity, its knowledge traditions and its socio-economic systems. The focus of the series is on action-oriented critical analysis about a variety of contemporary topics, including the environment, consumerism, technology, health and education.

Another set of such booklets under Multiversity is being brought out by Vinay Lal. Those who wish to be kept posted of new titles should consult multiworld.org for more details.

Framing Knowledge: Making Visual Documentation

Organized around knowledge gained through visual material, the first Multiversity workshop was about making socially relevant documentaries of short duration. The focus was on teaching the art of filmmaking, especially the visual images surrounding us. Producing new knowledge through visual material or systematically probing someone else's material can be a lot of fun and enthusiasm, emotions little associated with formal learning nowadays.

The workshop aimed to help participants move from being passive consumers of visual knowledge to creative producers of moving images and their relationship with other media. Anybody who wanted to know how visual media was produced was welcome to participate in the workshop. The workshop provided its participants with vital clues to enable them to read critically much of the media that comes their way. At the end of the workshop, the participants were also to develop an employable skill.

Organised on the assumption that learning is a continuous experience and people have experiences from which they can generate knowledge, the workshop emphasized the fun involved in developing and nurturing skills within a collective rather than credentials in the form of certificates and degrees that help people get jobs. A greater social participation in the immediate surroundings, a sense of empowerment and individual fulfilment were also anticipated fallouts of participating in the workshop.

Specific objectives:

- To explore visual images, both still and moving and forms of knowledge that have been neglected in conventional learning approaches.
- To learn to critically analyse, research, and reflect on the visual media and its relationship with other media, in particular the written medium.
- To create new knowledge-products based on the participants social experience with and through visual media
- To generate a collaborative learning environment with a heterogeneous group of participants where the participant is both central and responsible for her/his learning experience.

Learning methods:

Participants in the group were expected to construct their own learning – through discovery. They also had the freedom to choose the course of their learning. The facilitators helped the participants acquire the necessary skills related to visual and written media. The workshop had both structured and unstructured parts.

The workshop enabled its participants to accomplish everything they needed, including making visual documentation in the forms of digital videos, photo essays, power point presentations, cartoons, etc. At the same time, they participated in critically reflecting on different modes of research, writing and visualising including research through using visual media.

The workshop ensured that by the end, each participant, either individually or in a group, was able to produce a short digital documentary, which the organisers display in future at an appropriate forum.

Participants are expected to develop an innovative approach towards reading, writing, making and viewing images. In other words, they will have a composite understanding of various dimensions of knowledge. They will also acquire skills in making moving images, writing and visualizing. Finally, they will learn the art of expressing ideas in a powerful manner.

Course Contents and Schedule

Gen. introduction to documentary/the medium of cinema, the process of film production. Concept of framing in relation to our gaze. Use of cut out/frame.

Introduction to the way knowledge is produced and consumed. The relation between the image and the word. Exercises and participatory reading sessions will be the mode of learning.

Framing and composing shots, the principle of continuity, building a narrative structure. Creative use of camera lenses and camera movements, using still camera.

Exercises in translating complex and abstract ideas into a visual format. We will analyze the various "Beginners" series (comic books) and make attempts to create our own texts.

Use of video camera. Shooting a five shot continuity exercise.

We will see a series of films and photographs and read passages of texts and poems and try and examine the way acts of writing, acts of reading, acts of composing images and acts of viewing images are all connected with each other.

Learning the editing tools and techniques, editing the 5 shot continuity.

Analysis of the continuity exercise. From rushes to editing, using existing footage to edit at least one sequence, – from logging to Edit. Working on individual scripts.

We will examine 'cyberspace' and the internet as new contexts for image-word interactivity. Discussion exercises and viewing websites.

Working on individual scripts (with interaction with facilitators through the Net).

There will be a discussion about the scripts that the participants have produced in the context of the themes that have been addressed in the earlier sessions. It is hoped that these discussions will feed into the process of making the films.

Plan – Shooting of three scripts.

(A digicam will be available to the participants to share amongst themselves for the whole month to shoot their films).

Post Production for 3 films.

We will attempt to compose visually informed texts of any kind that the participants are interested in (essays, poems, stories) and create critically informed still images as an attempt to create a separate body of texts from the ones they are producing as films.

7

Multiversity: Associated Persons, Institutions and Organisations

Multiversity Council of Elders

Haji Mohamed Idris (chairperson)
Samdhong Rinpoche
Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer
Dharampal
Pujya Hitruchivijayji Maharaj

Advisory Board

Haji Mohamed Idris (Chairperson)
Mohideen Kader
Anwar Fazal
Ashis Nandy
Vinay Lal
Shilpa Jain
Ngugi wa Thiong'o
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email: gustavoesteva@terra.com.mx

Collaborating Institutions

Shikshantar, Udaipur, India
Abhivyakti, Nasik, India
Other India Bookstore, Goa, India
Al-Jame'ah, Lebanon
Terras, Malaysia
Infinity Foundation, USA

Interact with Multiversity

Main webpage: www.multiworld.org
Enquiries: multiversity@multiworld.org
taleem@multiworld.org (deschooling)
organic@multiworld.org (natural farming institute)

Citizens International webpage: www.citizensint.org
email: cizs@tm.net.my

Multiversity discussion page:
http://groups.msn.com/multiversity

Multiversity USA webpage:
http://www.bol.ucla.edu/~vlal/multiversity/
email: vlal@history.ucla.edu

Multiversity Papers

This volume provides the reader with the text of the discussions surrounding the start of the Multiversity project – designed to stimulate a fresh look at learning for the self, for the community and for the environment.

The book contains the edited transcripts of the original meeting that launched the Multiversity in Penang, Malaysia, and other related papers as well. It also contains a brief resume of work done under the project since its inauguration.

The Multiversity idea runs contrary to the perspective around which most formal educational systems – implanted in all nooks and corners of the planet like some painful and fatal disease – are organised.

Schools, colleges, universities produce millions of homogeneous products no differently from factories producing toothpaste or shoes. The certified emerge equipped with marginal social skills (compelling the unlearned to keep the planet running). All that this grand circus of educational institutions offers for the chase are paper certificates promising (the illusion of) employment. The few successful individuals that make it to the top get bonded to ever higher levels of serfdom in the employ of corporates, in exchange for consumer trivia – and lifetime imprisonment of their souls.

Multiversity seeks to reclaim learning from these formal, insidious structures of domination and control. It focuses on the decolonising of knowledge and the liberation of learners, especially children, from the constricting embrace of all formal and coercive learning institutions including the school.

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